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DETECTIVE STORIES

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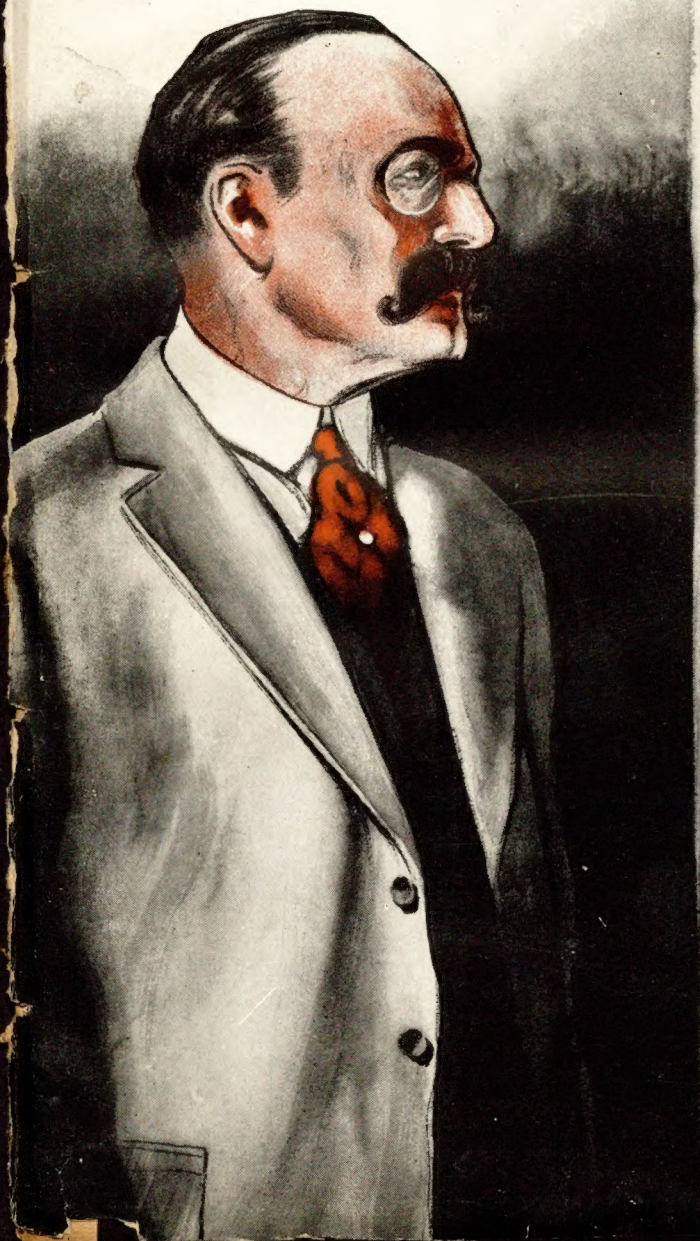

FEATURE STORY

"The Trail of a Rogue"

by

GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. VI MAY 1, 1923 No. 131

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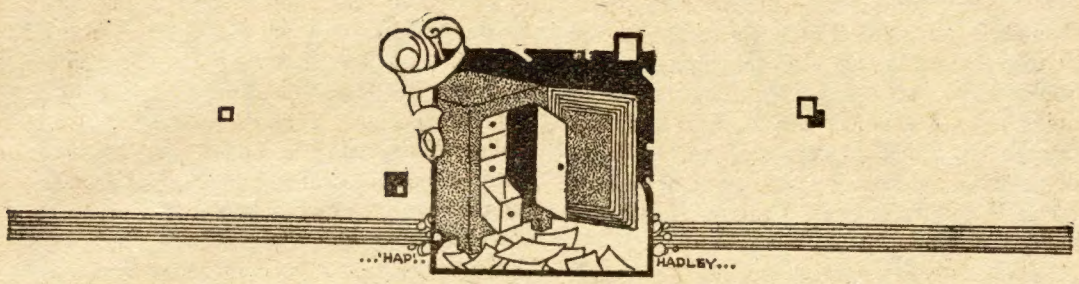

THE TRAIL OF A ROGUE

by George Bronson Howard

CHAPTER ONE

ON a certain morning in November, 1919, Sergeant Pierre Sands bounced, unannounced, into the presence of Detective Rudolf Valentine, assistant to the Chief Intelligence Officer, London area, International Police.

"Got a blank warrant, Captain Val?" he demanded. "Because if you haven't one right handy," he went on in an extremely excited manner, "get one, and get one in a hurry."

The tall, solemn Scotland Yard man looked aghast at so many infractions of etiquette on the part of one who was apparently of the same low rank as one of his respected subordinates.

"It's a bird I just got an eyeful of that used to be our paymaster time of the first Somme battle and who musta skipped with the Legion payroll when the few of us left in our battalion thought he was killed and the money lost. Just spotted him in Piccadown-dilly."

"Don't make a monkey of yourself, Sands," Valentine interrupted with some asperity. "This gentleman is Inspector Crowland of Scotland Yard. I don't want him to think the International Police carries idiots on its payroll. Suppose I have a blank warrant; what of it?"

"This of it, captain: I charge this man I'm telling you about with embezzling the battalion payroll, desertion under fire, and a lot more things I just can't get the right words for just now. But if you don't hustle along and follow me, I'm afraid we'll lose that bird. He knows me by sight, and he's a wily one. I'm not sure he didn't spot me about the same time I spotted him. I followed him to the Australian Officers' Club in St. James, and waited there until I could hail a bobby. I showed him my badge and my authorization and left him there to watch until I could get you. Moreover, I asked the commissionaire who opened the taxi door."

"You asked the commissionaire—what?"

"Who this bird was whom I'd known as Lieutenant Lang, and he said he was Captain Harvey Byng, Anzac officer."

During the latter part of the conversation Valentine had slipped into his fur-collared tweed coat and donned a cap of the same material.

"Coming, inspector?" he asked. "This is *our* man right enough, but it never does any harm to have a C. I. D. inspector along.

The International Police isn't as well known as Scotland Yard. Not *yet!*"

He had snatched a volume from the shelf over his telephone desk—an elaborate affair, that desk surrounded by a glass cabinet for privacy when using the telephone. The book, which was partly printed, partly in holograph, contained the names and addresses of allied officers resident in London, including the N. C. O.s, and was kept up to the minute, every change of address being recorded.

"'Gray's Inn, Holburn,'" he read. "'Harvey Byng, M.C., French War Cross, two palms, brevet-major temporarily commanding battalion Argonne drive.' Hello, Sands, fairly distinguished egg you want me to crack. Carleton House Terrace Brass Hats will flay you alive for this if you're wrong."

"I'm not wrong, sir, and you'd better get a move on or you'll find you *are!*" responded Sands stubbornly. "Aren't you going to the Australian Officers' Club first?"

"And frighten your 'bird' out of the coverts before we have anything to go on? Remember resemblances are deceiving sometimes, Sands. And if he *is* your man, and he *did* see you, you can go bet your shirt he's not waiting calmly for us to come and take him. Thank Heaven you weren't in uniform, or it would have been all off."

They had reached the street long since and had entered one of the cars that were always in readiness for members of the I. P. Inspector Crowland, who was of the bulldog type that never relinquishes its hold on anything until through with it, resumed the conversation Sands had interrupted.

"Well, captain, you've given me *something* to go on, at all events. It never struck me before that this series of robberies was committed by former soldiers."

"I think some master-crook, a good deal cleverer than we have any idea, has capitalized the desire of certain men who think they have grievances and used them as tools. All officers weren't angels."

"That's true, by George," agreed Inspector Crowland, nodding wisely.

"You grasp the situation, inspector, very thoroughly. Such is my hypothesis. Look at the two men you *have* caught. Has either one of them the brains for such a piece of planning and reasoning as would have been necessary before either one of them entered the house he was sent to rob? Has either of them the brains to dispose of the loot? Remember those carved gems of Colonel Archinbold's, rajah loot that cost its owner many a hundred thousand lacs of rupees, but that would need a special market to realize anything like their value. Is 'Enery 'Awkins the sort who could find that market?"

"Harry Harper," corrected the Scotland Yard man seriously.

"Or is that other chap, that former mechanician in the air service—Pillsbury, isn't it?—is he the kind of man who'd know what to do with the seven canvases he was sent to cut from their frames? A Gainsborough, a Sir Joshua, a Romney, two Gilbert Stuarts, and two unknown old masters. What would he do with such stuff? And why would he steal it? And who taught him how to remove a canvas from a frame and substitute another so skillfully that it was a week or more before the substitution was discovered? And then only because an art critic happened to go down to Maddersley Grange. Who, I say, put up an ignorant, uncouth, ill-mannered, and worse-educated hooligan from Whitechapel to such work—eh?"

"Some beastly clever Johnny or the other," was the serious man's calm reply. "I'll tell you—some Raffles chap—eh?"

This time it was the younger detective who was serious.

"Do you know, inspector, I shouldn't wonder if you were right about that. Well, here's Gray's Inn. We'll postpone this talk until we've had a look at the rooms and papers of this suspected embezzler and deserter. Suppose you tackle that porter and get him to open up for us. It'll save time when he knows that it is Scotland Yard that is ordering it."

The exterior of Gray's Inn, like that of so many of the great residential flats, apartments, and chambers in London, was unprepossessing in the extreme—weather-scarred

and battered, thick with the grime of the London soot and fog. But once one had passed under one of its entrance arches and up a flight of stone stairs and down another, one suddenly left London behind.

Many little individual doors gave admittance to the apartments on the ground floor, while short flights of stone steps opening abruptly off the green led to the upper ones. The porter led the way up one of these and opened a door on the second floor, albeit rather unwillingly.

"I do hope that the capting ain't done nothin' as will get him in no trouble, I do," he wheezed in exceptionally high, shrill tones. "Rare gen'rus he is, the capting; there'll be those as'll miss 'im."

Valentine put a half-sovereign into the old man's hand and smiled at him. He looked fine, did Valentine, in his rough, shaggy coat of Irish tweeds with cap and spats made of the same material and silken waistcoat and tie both cut from the same piece.

And he had a particularly pleasing smile on his face.

"There's another one of those for you if you forget to tell the captain that we're here when he comes in. We'd prefer to have him come in and find us here. You won't forget? There's another one of those, another nice round shiny one if you don't. You won't forget?"

Chuckling, the old fellow stumped away. Valentine closed the door behind him.

"Like to help in the inspection?" he asked the Scotland Yard man. But that gentleman, serious always, wore now a look so intensely solemn that it seemed to choke him. He could not so much as wag his head, although he seemed to have some such intention.

He stood, staring straight before him.

Sands looked again. Both men were staring at a painting that hung, somewhat in shadow, above the fireplace mantel. To Sergeant Sands it seemed a rather stupid sort of picture—dull and ugly and old. "Nothing to write mother about," as he phrased it, wondering at the excitement of the other two men.

CHAPTER TWO

VALENTINE was the first to recover his breath and to make some attempt to regain his self-possession. The latter, however, was a dismal failure. He only succeeded in winking the monocle out of his eye.

"My God—the Gainsborough—*the* Gainsborough. The Gainsborough from Maddersley Hall——"

"Grange," interrupted the serious inspector in a sort of gasp.

"Hang it all, man, does it make any difference whether it's 'Hall' or 'Grange' when one of the stolen pictures that every criminal investigation agent in London's been looking for pops up before our very eyes? To think of it! But, no, it can't be! It's not possible! It must be a copy. Here, Sands, help me get it down. Inspector, are you carrying a gun?"

"A gun?" replied the Englishman. "No, I—ah, you mean am I armed? Oh, yes, quite!"

From his hip pocket he produced a small Webley.

"Stand behind that door, then, so that when this fellow opens it you can stick him up; that is, old fellow, tell him to throw up his hands, you know. Right there!"

It was a handsomely furnished room, and one side was entirely given up to the Gainsborough painting.

As well it might be, for it was one of those famous pictures that have made the curving black hat-brim and sweeping plume of the black picture-hat allied forever with the painter's name. Other description, save that it was his portrait of the Duchess of Dorset, is unnecessary; even the inartistic know the Gainsboroughs.

Before the fire stood two saddle-bag chairs which Sands and Valentine ascended to get the huge canvas down. It had been remounted in a heavy frame of dull ancient golden bronze, whose age and richness of subdued color was such that it might have been the original. But to this Valentine paid little attention save to remove it as speedily as was compatible with the portrait's safety.

Valentine carried the canvas to the window and held it off at arm's length. The fading afternoon sunshine, falling athwart the oaks and elms and percolating through the ivy-hung window, bathed it in sombre waves of light.

"The real thing!" Valentine breathed reverently. "That is, if my year at Julian's Studio means anything. But——"

Inspector Crowland was fumbling for his huge notebook with his free hand. When he found it he pocketed his pistol and rapidly turned the pages.

" 'Description of canvas; physical peculiarities.' On reverse side: 'Bought from Benrimo Brothers, the Poultry,' and date: all stamped, faded, but almost entirely visible through hand lens."

"Lord! I didn't know they had rubber stamps in the eighteenth century," murmured Valentine, and while the inspector continued to read more details of the 'physical peculiarities' of the masterpiece his pocket lens was busy. "It's all here, Crowland; you needn't go on. It's the real thing, all right enough. Lord!"

He had relinquished the picture to Sands the while he examined it. With his last exclamation he became suddenly galvanized into a jack-in-the-box-like activity.

"Crowland, do you realize what this means? Sands, this spells a bonus for you, my boy. We've found your 'Raffles,' inspector, or I'm a heavy-footed 'flatty.' I am, by the almighty liverlights! Sands, get on guard behind that door. Inspector, do you care to help me hunt through this man's things? On second thought, no; can't spare Sands. He'll have to help me open that safe. Knowing what we were coming for, I suppose you brought those tools?"

Sergeant Sands nodded joyously and took from his pocket a chamois roll, which, unwrapped, showed many affairs of chilled steel, each held in its place by a canvas pocket.

He began to lay these out, whistling the while. Valentine unscrewed an arc from an overhead electrolier and reached out his hand. Sands laid in the palm the plug of an attachment which he screwed into the arc's place. At the other end of the wire was a curious forked arrangement that looked like a gigantic slungshot or a curving two-branched candelabrum containing two black candles.

Valentine laid this on the library table, while he donned a pair of rubber gloves and pulled a tightly fitting rubber cap over his head and brows. Sands forsook his squatting position on the floor long enough to fasten about his chief's face a tinfoil mask with eyelets of isinglass.

"Better find the fuse box, hadn't I, captain?" he asked gruffly. "You remember the last time we tried this trick we blew out all the fuses in the place. How about it?"

Valentine nodded as he knelt before the safe. It was a Meryon-Mall of reinforced battleship steel of the sort proudly denominated "burglar-proof" by its makers. And, indeed, the boast was well enough where the average marauder was concerned. It could not have been opened with the ordinary drill, electrically propelled or no. Nor would there have been the slightest chance of it yielding to that "sense of touch" treatment made famous by the movies.

Inspector Crowland watched Valentine with something akin to horror. He could hardly believe what he saw.

"My God, man, *you're* not going to turn *burglar?*"

"Yes, terrible, isn't it? I'm not sure it isn't your duty to arrest me. Are you?"

The quizzical smile was hidden by the tinfoil mask. But Inspector Crowland remained serious.

"Oh, I don't know that it would go as far as *that*. But——"

"Found it," broke in Sands, returning. "Put in our fuses. Go as far as you like, cap."

Valentine lifted the forked affair, shaking its insulated wire attachment. Sands straightened out the kinks in the wire until it formed a straight line from the electrolier to the safe-dial, against which Valentine now held it, gripping the middle part with both gloved hands.

Both of the black candles were now touching the Harveyized steel of the safe dial.

"Ready?" asked Sands. Valentine nodded. Sands snapped on the power. Instantly a steel-blue spark leaped across space between the two carbon candles, joining them.

As the pointed nose of a mouse burrows into soft cheese, so this spark seemed to eat into the steel dial.

The Scotland Yard man watched like one in a hypnotic trance. For all his acquaintance with crime this was perhaps the first time he had ever seen a safe opened by the scientific methods in vogue among the newer kind of criminal.

Sands seemed grimly amused at the Englishman's unconcealed horror.

"Ain't it awful!" he murmured, smiling.

"Now, Sands," adjured Valentine sharply, and drew away from the safe, dropping what was left of the destroying carbons, somewhat gingerly and at arm's length, on the bricks of the fireplace.

While he was drawing off his protecting mask and gloves Sands snapped off the power, unscrewed the attachment, and tossed it on the skin of a polar bear that lay on the floor.

Then from another pocket of the chamois roll he took a pair of clamps, caught the safe knob with them, and pulled open the door. He tried the strong-box. It failed to yield. He replaced the clamps and took out another tool, with which he levered it open, and motioned his chief to proceed.

"For the love of Mike, Crowland! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! Look!"

He had laid hands first on a big square suede box. His exclamation had followed its opening. For there, snugly reposing in little individual beds of plush, were a number of the world's most unique collection of carved emeralds—Colonel Archinbold's.

CHAPTER THREE

BOTH men had been recently examining photographs of these very gems; it was not therefore strange that both should instantly recognize the famous white emerald of Tippoo, for which the old fellow had paid a cool thousand. The Maharanee of Jighore's double isosceles triangular-shaped emerald, on which some Thibetan lama had inscribed the words of the magical ordination used when the Grand Lama was consecrated. The——

In short, a round dozen of the best.

Detective Valentine tossed Crowland the box and got to work in grim earnest. In the course of the next five minutes the safe had been cleaned out, and the floor revealed portions of the loot of every one of those mysterious robberies of the past six months or so that had mystified London so completely, and for which but two men had been arrested—two men who could not possibly have planned the malefactions for which they had been jailed, but who nevertheless had done the actual "tooling"; two men, moreover, who stubbornly refused to talk, realizing as they did that, had they kept their stupid mouths shut, they would still be free.

"Their wives and families will be looked after while they're in, and they'll be taken care of when they get out, if they keep mum," Valentine had said wisely at the time. "So why *should* they talk?"

"Incidentally," he had added, "they've probably been warned, if they do talk, they'll be shot on sight, first pop."

Well, it seemed that all he had said was in a fair way to be proven. There *was* a master-criminal at the back of all these marauders, one with the cloak of the service covering his misdeeds; one whose assurance was such that he had actually made application to be admitted into M. I. 5, the inner citadel of the British Intelligence, where, with its inside information at his command, he might have become impregnable.

Valentine rose from the rug-strewn floor. Scattered over the skins of polar bears, tigers, and bears (doubtless part of some marauder's loot) lay every sort of valuable, the sort selected not alone for intrinsic value (though it was great), but for artistic worth as well: Jewels, gold-smithery, crystal, rare silken tapestries, some as old as the "Morte d'Arthur" deeds, from which one or two pieces commemorated, and rare museum bits of amber, ivory, and pottery—

particularly pottery, and more particularly the Chinese and Japanese sort: enamels, cloisonne, Satsuma, peach-blow porcelains. His own private collection on bookshelves and overmantel was sufficiently precious to have attracted the envy of a prince or a millionaire. But these that the safe revealed were almost sacrosanct, so rare and beautiful were they.

And precious!

"My God! What this man doesn't know about pottery," remarked Valentine reverently.

He roused himself. "Sands, collect all that, and put it back in the safe. Wait; you're handling it too carelessly. I'll help; watch me. Now, Crowland, we can't take any chances of this fellow escaping us. You remain here, just where you are, behind that door. Sands, a chair for the inspector. Now, in case Byng should attempt to get in and we should miss him—which isn't likely, but it's best to take every possibility in consideration in dealing with anybody as clever as this—you stick him up, as I told you before, and march him out of here with his hands in air. Don't let him stall about getting a handkerchief or a cigarette or anything like that; shoot if he takes his hands down; shoot and disable his right arm."

"And you?" asked the serious Crowland, his air the same one of polite concern he might have used had he been asking where they should have tea.

"I'll be below, on the Gray's Inn roadside, waiting for our gentleman to show up. Sands, you'll take the other entrance. It——"

His voice trailed off as he shut the door behind him and left Crowland in sole possession.

No, not in sole possession. Very far from that. For, some minutes after the door had closed, when nothing broke the silence save the inspector's steady breathing, when the last ray of sunlight had flickered for a moment on the lid of a big brass coffer, that same lid was cautiously raised an inch or so and a human eye peered out.

It had grown dark in the room.

The inspector stood so still he seemed to doze. But his eyes were open, staring almost painfully at the door; so painfully, in fact, that he blinked every now and again.

The lid of the great brass coffer remained stationary; the eye continued to survey the room. Finally it fixed itself on the inspector and remained there. The shadows deepened, the room became almost completely dark.

Now the lid of the great coffer chest began to rise steadily, inch by inch. As it came up one standing close could have seen that it was being propelled upward by the flat of a man's hand, the palm and wrist steady, strong as steel—as steady and as strong as the other hand, which held an automatic pistol trained at the inspector's head.

The lid had risen to the height of the man's arm held at full length before the inspector noticed anything. It was the creaking of its hinges as the man let it back to rest against the wall that first attracted the inspector's attention and caused him to turn swiftly, his pocket Webley whirling up in air.

The other man wasted no time.

"As you were," he barked. "Don't move another inch or I'll kill you."

As he spoke the inspector caught sight of him, fired, then flattened himself behind the door. So did the other. The inspector's bullet pinged against the solid brass lid as the man ducked. Byng's bullet (for it was the owner of the apartment himself) struck the Scotland Yard man.

Crowland got to his feet with a convulsive effort, then his knees went slack beneath him, and he slumped down and fell forward, dead.

The Webley had slipped from his hand as he fell; in death the fingers closed about the head of one of the polar-bear skins. His right leg, outthrust in his death throes, brought the tip of his boot hard against the head of a tiger skin.

So there he lay, rapidly growing stiff, and Harvey Byng examined him with quick, expert hands.

"Dead! Now that's too bad," he made comment. "They'll be twice as hot after me now. Lord! It's lucky I recognized that

Yanko-Franco Sands this morning and was prepared for this. And it's lucky I tipped that old porter heavily enough so that he raised his voice outside in the hall and didn't tell them I'd already come in. Now, if I hadn't given him that five-pound note——"

His thoughts trailed off to his immediate safety. He had been arming and supplying himself when the others had come. He had removed the Australian insignia from his uniform and replaced it with that of the old army, which he had bought against his transfer to M. I. 5. Also the red reveres and cap-band and the new cap with the golden leafage. Sands would not have recognized him now, with his little pointed gray mustache and the grizzled hair about his temples. A few cunning lines here and there had helped.

In his pockets was what he had long denominated as "his get-away" or "fall" money—one hundred five-pound notes—while around his waist and next his skin was a money-belt containing one hundred and fifty golden sovereigns. Instead of field-glasses the case swung over one shoulder contained milk chocolate, on which he proposed to exist until he was well out of England, avoiding chances of arrest in restaurants. The dispatch-bag, swung over the other shoulder (being on home service, he wore no Sam Browne), held an entire change of raiment, save for his riding breeches, which he proposed to retain; the coat wrapped up in so small a compass was of Bedford cords also, and, wearing the two together with leggings instead of boots, he meant to pass as a groom.

So boldly he opened the apartment door and peered through the crack between the hinges. The corridor was empty. He stood for a moment, looking back into the room, and as the light from the hall fell athwart the fireplace overmantel, he sighed heavily at this reminder of the loss of his beautiful Chinese porcelains.

His eyes flickered down to the floor, where the light revealed the dead man, one foot touching the head of the tiger, one hand clutching the head of the bear. And he sighed again.

"It's too bad," he muttered. "I never meant to kill him; just to shoot the gun out of his hand. Confound a slipshod automatic, anyhow, with his side-jigger movement. It's too bad."

But when he shut the door he forgot all about it; his thoughts were too intent on his own safety. He chose the Gray's Inn roadside, for Valentine had never seen him and Sands had, and, disguise or no, there was no use in taking chances.

So down to the green he marched and under the stone archway. When he reached the little door behind which the porter sat hugging his knees at his little stone fireplace, he paused to light a cigar. He never smoked cigars, only cigarettes, but a cigar had seemed to be more in keeping with the part he had assumed.

Out of the tail of his eye he observed Valentine, hands thrust deep in the pockets of his rough frieze coat, collar upturned, cap over eyes.

Captain Valentine had never seen Captain Byng. The general description Sands had applied was now useless: hair, mustache—the color of both, that is—the insigna, reveres and hat-band, and the fact that Valentine believed Byng had yet to come in—this was too notable a combination of differences for the International Policeman to have any suspicion of the middle-aged G. S. officer.

Their eyes met as Byng, having his cigar drawing to his satisfaction, stepped briskly out to the pavement and hailed a passing taxi. The eyes of both betrayed complete indifference. Valentine resumed his quick glances up and down Gray's Inn road. Byng suppressed a sigh of relief and let his tense right hand (which had been ready to plunge into his tunic and seize the gun that hung beneath his left armpit) fall limp.

"The Savoy," he told the chauffeur. Not that he had any intention of going there. When he turned the corner he would change the address to Paddington Station.

And that was the last Valentine saw of Captain Byng for many and many a day. Hours later, when both he and Sands gave up their watch, he said, sighing, too:

"Well, you're right. He must have recognized you, Peter."

To which Sands returned a growl.

"If that poor Scotland Yard man's as hungry as I am, he could eat a horse."

"Poor Crowland!" laughed Valentine. But it was a wry laugh. But nothing like so wry as the look that came over his face when he had mounted to the Byng apartment, thrown open the door, and saw no Crowland there.

The room was still in the shadows, and at first it did not occur to Valentine to look down. His eyes surveyed the various chairs and remained at the level of those articles of furniture, and still encountered no one.

Then he became alarmed. "Crowland! Crowland!" he called. "Hie, there, inspector! Where are you, Crowland?"

A premonition of disaster overcame him. His hand sought the automatic pistol in his overcoat pocket. He brought it out and began advancing stealthily.

Then he stumbled over something, and with a great cry sprang backward to the shelter of the door. Once in the hall, however, he gave a quick downward glance.

He never forgot what he saw. It haunted him for years.

CHAPTER FOUR

A BROAD band of yellow light from the hall—almost like a yellow path it was. And lying in it, one hand clutching the polar bear's head, one foot touching the tiger's, the dead man.

Sands, coming to join him after a tour of the hall, saw the sick look on his face, and asked what the matter was. Valentine pointed. For the moment he could not speak at all. When he found his voice again no one could possibly have taken him for a young Oxford undergraduate waiting for a girl.

"He's killed him, that damn Byng!" he croaked harshly. "Killed? I mean murdered; he's murdered him. Listen to me tell you this, Sands; remind me of it if I forget; everything goes by the board until I get this fellow, d'you understand? Everything. Until I get him! Whether it takes months or years. Until I get him!"

"Yes, sir," returned Pierre Sands, the ordinarily irreverent ex-trooper of the Legion, who often said "sir," but seldom meant it. He meant it this time, though.

Another change: the harsh lines about the mouth disappeared, the lips quivered just a little. "This poor solemn chap was telling me about his baby, Sands. Wife just had a baby last week; bored me to death with it then; d'you understand? I wonder if you realize how glad I am I didn't let him know I was bored?"

"Yes, sir," answered Sergeant Peter Sands, and there was a suspicious quiver, an odd twitch to his lips, too. "Yes, sir, captain, I sure do. Yes, indeedy, captain. But, lookit! He died doin' his dooty, didn't he, jest like a lot of us did during the big scrap. That's something. His wife'll be glad to know that; baby, too, when it grows up. And he helped us rout out a master-criminal."

"*Helped* us, Peter," said Valentine very sternly. "You mean we helped him. You've heard about posthumous promotions which mean so much in the way of pensions, haven't you, Sands? He already had a couple of curly-heads. I've seen 'em. And now this baby! Realize the difference it means in his wife's pension if we helped *him?*"

He had closed the hall door while they talked, and the two men stood in darkness. They preferred it to the sight of what lay on the floor. Only the faint luminosity of windows reflecting some of the dim light from the flickering old gas lamps in the court disturbed the purple-black of the shadows.

"He got a clue, somehow, Sands, and followed it up. Now, how did he get that clue? My head isn't at its best just now, so I expect we'll have to let the 'how' part of it go. Suffice to say he *got* it, didn't he?"

"Poor old Scotty here was the one who spotted the picter, was he, cap? You know there'll probably be an inquest and——"

Valentine nodded. "Of course, he ex-

pected to find it here. It was seeing so many things come to this apartment that finally made him determine to search it. You remember him saying in the cab: 'I wouldn't be surprised at all if we should find some of the Maddersley Grange pictures there; while I was on watch last night I saw something suspiciously like a wrapped-up canvas delivered.' Of course he'd linked up the robberies—on suspicion. You heard him in the cab——"

"You mean what *you* said?" asked Sands. "About getting soldiers who had grudges——"

"What *I* said? Oh, Sands!" said Valentine reproachfully.

"What *he* said, I mean."

"Right. And when he had searched the apartment and found those burglars' tools, he suggested our helping him open the safe. And when the rest of the loot was found he insisted on remaining here to take his prisoner single-handed while we were asked to watch the two entrances. Now, have you got that straight?"

Sands nodded. Valentine put out his hand. They shook.

"Now, much against my will, Peter, I'm afraid we'd better look this place over before a lot of muddle-headed jackasses come and trample everything out of existence. Turn on the light."

For some little while there was silence, while Valentine went through the three rooms that made up the suite of chambers. He found the open brass coffer, its lid resting against the wall, Crowland's bullet imbedded in it, some mud from Byng's boot-soles on the bottom, and cursed his own stupidity.

"I ought to have suspected that porter, Sands. He's done us brown. Byng was here all the time."

Sands growled ominously. Valentine continued his search. At the conclusion of a few more minutes he sighed.

"Loves purple and fine linen, smokes a peculiarly atrocious brand of New Orleans cigarettes, is an amateur painter—a dilettante in the arts altogether, particularly loves and knows Chinese porcelains, and has good taste in clothes. I can find no photograph of him here, but there'll be one on file at Australian H. Q. Well, I suspect we'd best call in Scotland Yard now."

As he closed the door behind him he did what Byng had done: looked back at the dead man whose hand clutched the polar bear's head, whose foot touched the tiger.

CHAPTER FIVE

THIS happened three months after the armistice. It was three years before Rudolf Valentine had any definite hope of locating Harvey Byng again. Meanwhile the International Police was kept busy dealing with the sort of criminals it had been created to cope with. Incidentally from a temporary it became a permanent body.

Byng was Rudolf Valentine's first big disappointment. He remained so during the ensuing three years, although the young American strained every possibility within his power to bring him to book. But Byng seemed simply to have vanished from the face of the earth.

How he had managed to get out of England alone was enough to exasperate anybody when one had taken as many precautions against him doing so as Valentine had. And with the able and intelligent assistance of that vast and highly trained organization, the C. I. D. of Scotland Yard, with operatives in every class of life from the Oxford graduate to the Limehouse hooligan.

Despite all these bodies of highly intelligent and efficient men and women and their determination that he should not leave England, that is alive, Byng left England. Alive, too. Not that Rudolf Valentine knew this for a positive fact until he read a press-clipping that dealt with the theft of the kiau-yao peach-blow "bubble," a rare piece of pottery.

Valentine had but four traits of the late Anzac captain to go upon: his love for good clothes and bad cigarettes, his desire to paint and to collect rare Chinese pottery.

The first three offered little chance for identifying anything he might do via the

news column, but the fourth might possibly yield some little unimportant-looking item that he, Valentine, could link up with the career of the escaped killer.

He had no expectation of anything like the two-column double-spread-head story cut from the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail,* one of the two journals for American travelers on the Continent, that tumbled out with the other press-cuttings on other subjects one morning three Novembers after the killing of Crowland.

The headlines startled him into uneasy sentience:

$5,000 VASE STOLEN

"Peach-blow 'Bubble' Gone from the Collection of Robert Kershaw of Forge, N. J.

"Collector's Nephew Held at Police Headquarters. Uncle Bails Him Out.

"Sir Kenneth MacQuarrie Said Vase Was Priceless."

The reporter, or Associated Press correspondent, who had written the thing had let himself go on the romantic history of the opalescent iridescent vase that, because it resembled nothing so much in its fragile rainbow beauty as a soap-bubble about to be released from a youngster's pipe, was known as the "Peach-Blow Bubble."

It was a rare and priceless piece of kiauyao porcelain, many centuries old, and had been in the possession of the Chinese royal family until the rise of the recent republic, when it was sold by the dowager's majordomo to Dr. Robert Kershaw, Ph.D., F. R. G. S., the renowned Orientalist and collector, who, it seemed, had recently figured in the news columns of the Forge papers twice.

First, when he willed his entire collection of porcelains, enamels, Satsumas, and cloisonnes to the Metropolitan Museum of Forge.

Young Kershaw at the time had claimed that this was an injustice to him, as more than half of his uncle's former million or so had gone into the collection. He had spoken venomously of Dr. Handley Jackson's "base subterfuges" and "underhanded scheming."

The second time in the last half year that the Kershaw collection had provided Forge with news was when Sir Kenneth MacQuarrie, an even more renowned Orientalist than Kershaw, had visited Forge for no other reason than to examine the Kershaw collection and especially the "peach-blow bubble."

The vase had last been seen when Sir Kenneth himself laid it in its satin-lined case and Kershaw, the elder, locked up its own especial cabinet and put it away.

When he opened it again, a week later, he found that instead of his precious vase, a base imitation lay there. When the curator heard of it he sent for detectives, who later reported that young Kershaw was in debt to the extent of the selling value of the "peach-blow bubble."

Against his uncle's protests, Alan's arrest followed. A night at police headquarters and a modified third degree failed, however, to do anything except intensify the young man's indignation. In the morning his uncle had bailed him out and had unconditionally revoked his bequest to the Metropolitan Museum.

Rudolf Valentine read no more. He was one of those gifted trackers of the truth whose instinctive impulses, so called, once aroused to a high pitch, are of more value than the slow and painful deductions of another.

He sat for some time staring unseeingly at the newspaper clipping. Suddenly he leaned a little forward, his ears twitching as though he were listening to some invisible speaker.

Valentine remained in this position, ears cocked, eyes alert, until he returned to immediate action. Then he took down the telephone book and began hunting industriously for the listing of that well-known Orientalist, Sir Kenneth MacQuarrie.

He did not know why he knew the baronet lived in London, but somehow he took it for granted. The book justified him in his belief. It listed that gentleman twice:

once at the University, again in the Kensington Exchange. Rudolf Valentine lifted the combination transmitter-receiver from a box at his elbow and asked for it. It was answered by the discreet and modulated voice of an upper servant.

"Sir Kenneth, sir, is away; China, sir. Lady MacQuarrie?"

"Yes, please. One moment, though. When did Sir Kenneth leave? October 15th, you say? Thank you.—Lady MacQuarrie, will you be so good as to give me Sir Kenneth's itinerary? I assure you this is neither curiosity nor impertinence, but a very serious matter.—Oh, no; nothing's happened to Sir Kenneth, I'm thankful to say. I just want to know about where he'd be now. He left London October 15th, didn't he, and when last heard from was—— Cable from Honolulu day before yesterday? Then he's on the last lap of his transpontine trip, isn't he?—Two weeks to Japan. Thanks.—Would you mind telling me the date of his last letter?—The 27th you say, from Chicago? And any previous telegrams or cables?—One when he left San Francisco on the first? Wireless from the *Siberia?* Thank you ever so much, Lady MacQuarrie. This——"

And he told her who he was and why he had wanted the information, was cheered by her indignation at the impudent impersonation of her husband by some impostor or the other, and announced her intention of cabling Doctor Kershaw at once.

Which was precisely what Valentine wanted. A moment later he was sending a cablegram of his own, which read:

"INTOPOL,
"New York.

"Advise Chief Detectives Forge drop case against Kershaw. Sir Kenneth MacQuarrie on Pacific when alleged visit paid. Coming in person. Probably our case.

"VALE. 24"

He carried this in his hand when he knocked on a door marked "Chief Intelligence Officer, London Area." A knock and the mention of his name admitted him into the presence of the chief, who, since the conclusion of hostilities, had resumed the Vandyke beard and curling mustachios that had familiarized his face to the readers of the illustrated London papers.

Valentine handed over the cable. "Have I your permission, sir?" he inquired. "I've been waiting for something like this to turn up for the last three years."

"Something like——"

Valentine followed the cable with the clipping from the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail,* dated the day before and just arrived that morning. The other read it, glanced back at the cable, wrinkled his brows thoughtfully, read both again, and finally smiled somewhat perplexedly.

"Afraid you'll have to elucidate, my dear fellow," he said pleasantly. "I wasn't created by Poe or Doyle, only by an inferior and unknown author sometimes passing under the alias of Old Mother Nature. So——"

He spread his hands.

"Ever since the man known variously as Hadley Lang of the Foreign Legion and Harvey Byng of the Anzacs shot and killed poor old Crowland of Scotland Yard I've been hoping for a chance at him. I did all I could to keep him from getting out of England."

"So did everybody else," insisted his chief handsomely, "including yours sincerely."

"Well, it appears he did from that newspaper story."

The perplexed look returned to the Chief Intelligence Officer's handsome intellectual face. "I don't follow," he admitted.

"Well, sir, this Harvey Byng (as we may as well call him, although God alone knows what his name really is) had as handsome a collection of Chinese pottery in his rooms at Gray's Inn as ever it has been my fortune to encounter. More than that, he'd saved from the loot of half a dozen places almost every one of the Chinese or Japanese porcelains and Satsumas that had been stolen. Saved them for himself, kept them in his safe. He'd done the same with some of the more precious carved emeralds and the like. But he hadn't a private collection of those,

too. So I naturally assumed his greatest hobby was Chinese pottery."

"Sound enough, Val, sound enough."

"From my examination of the premises I found he was the sort of extraordinarily prudent man who either has no affairs with women or else receives no letters from them, or perhaps does so, but under another address and another name; also one without relatives or friends, so far as mail went. Banked his salary at Coutts in the usual way; banked nothing else; that is (again) under his (or that) name. In fact, there was so little to betray him——"

"That we didn't catch him. Quite so, Val. The sort who is always ready for arrest in case arrest comes. If there were many like him, the I. P. would be utterly useless obviously."

"Quite so. What a pity, sir, he wasn't one of us." His chief sighed in unison. "Well, to continue: he managed to hide everything that would give us the slightest clue, but he couldn't conceal his tastes. It was obvious, for instance, that he was an amateur painter—of sorts. A number of unfinished oils, a few pastels and water colors and any number of sketches all showed that if he hadn't decided to be a crook he'd have made a decentish sort of painter. So I've got that to go on, haven't I?"

"But the pottery? And the clipping?"

"Sir Kenneth MacQuarrie was on the *Siberia* headed for Hawaii at the time the peach-blow 'bubble' was stolen. He's on the same ship, journeying to Japan at the present moment."

"But"—his chief expanded the nose-piece of his Oxford eyeglasses and glanced at the date line—"this only happened yesterday, according to this cabled dispatch. At the time Sir Kenneth left, it says, the vase had been replaced."

Valentine smiled.

"You haven't been studying this over as I have for the past half-hour, sir, or you'd see it was obvious that the false Sir Kenneth, instead of replacing the real article, substituted his own imitation of it. That is, Byng did."

"What makes you think it *is* Byng?"

"What made me telephone Sir Kenneth's house in Kensington to ask for the dates of his arrivals and departures? Perhaps it's poor old Crowland's spirit at my elbow."

The Chief Intelligence Officer grinned. "Like the creator of the immortal Sherlock, you've turned spiritualist, eh? It seems to be catching among the local Hawkshaws."

Valentine shook his head stubbornly. "All spoofing aside, chief, I want to go to Forge and look this fellow over."

"What fellow?"

"Harvey Byng, or, if you like that better, the false Sir Kenneth MacQuarrie."

"Why necessarily in Forge. He arrived and departed in the usual manner."

"He would. But see here, sir; look at the actual facts I have to go on. Here's Byng, clever enough to get out of England and off this continent with the police of four countries watching for him—Scotland Yard plus M. I. 5 plus our lot so far as the U. K.'s concerned—also clever enough to have banked his money or invested it somehow, the proceeds of a dozen daring robberies here and in Paris and Monte Carlo, under false names—obviously, since it wasn't found under his own anywhere in England, France, Italy, or America. All he had here was at Coutt's—military pay and a little over."

"All of which leads up to what?"

"All of which leads up to this: that he's not compelled to risk his safety and his new estate and new name by taking any more chances. But his hobby is Chinese pottery. The peach-blow 'bubble' is the only thing of its kind. It's not for sale. Although he has enough money to buy him everything else (we roughly estimated his minimum share in the burglaries as something over fifty thousand pounds, allowing for the 'fences'' lowest prices), he isn't able to buy the peach-blow 'bubble' because it's not for sale; not even after Doctor Kershaw's death."

The chief nodded, comprehending.

"Then you think that a man, situated as this Byng must be, with all the police of his own country and those of all the other allied nations besides, would risk everything

—home, fortune, liberty, even his life—to lay his hands on one Chinese vase?"

He shook his head, adding: "It doesn't sound credible."

"Admitted, sir. But this fellow Byng isn't exactly credible himself. Think of the courage it must have taken, after deserting technically under fire with his Legion's battalion's payroll, to re-enlist with the Australians here at Winchester, pass himself off as one of them, and go back to France again, knowing the penalty is a shameful death, and, under such circumstance, to win a Brevet Majority and the M. C. That doesn't sound credible, either, does it?"

The chief smiled and said no, it didn't.

"But if you examine the premises carefully, this pottery theft has a certain sort of credibility. Here's a man with a hobby —a lonely, solitary sort of fellow. Neither relatives nor friends. His hobby becomes an obsession. Perhaps he already had a collection of sorts stowed away somewhere else before the war. Perhaps he's been adding to it ever since. Perhaps he gets the idea of having the greatest collection any one has—one that will bear his name (whatever the real one or the present one is). Then one morning he reads in the newspaper about the quarrel between the nephew and the Metropolitan Museum. He realizes that, so long as this belongs to any one else, *that* collection will be the best in the world. Let's assume for the sake of argument that, somewhere or the other, some time before he's picked up a tolerable imitation of the peach-blow bubble, the sort of thing the indiscriminate buyer brings home from Kobe, Nagasaki, or Yokohoma, paying crooked Japanese art dealers treble or quadruple its value, so near the real thing does it seem. For, as I've discovered since I've subscribed to that press-cutting agency for Chinese pottery clips——"

His chief smiled appreciatively. "In the hope that something like this might turn up? Sound, man."

"Thanks, sir. I say I've discovered that every famous piece or pattern of porcelain has its thousands of imitations. There's a Jap factory does nothing else. Well, say Byng bought one of these in a 'lot' of pottery pieces knocked down by some auctioneer. Can you see him rummaging among his discards, getting it out, setting it up, polishing and treating it to give it artificial lustre, and, as he probably subscribes to the trade journal dealing with such subjects as pottery collectors are interested in (there's always a journal for every darned thing, you know, sir), finally seeing something in it about Sir Kenneth sailing for China. He knows Doctor Kershaw will see it, too. So he lays his plans, waits until Sir Kenneth will be two weeks removed from the sight of newspapers and cable dispatches, and, using his old skill as a crook, pays his visit and by some thievish sleight-of-hand substitutes his fake under the very nose of Kershaw. It is locked up—and there you are."

"But—why Byng?"

"Can you picture any one with the crooked skill to plan and execute all this who, unless he was beyond financial worries, would have been satisfied to take only that one thing? If it had been stolen for profit, can't you see the thief would have arranged to steal the lot? Why, the collection is worth a quarter million, I believe, and contains hundreds of easily negotiable pieces which could be turned over at quite a decent price, say a hundred thousand or a little lass—dollars, I mean, of course. Your thief, your ordinary though high-class burglar, say, would certainly have laid his plans with that end in view. What other master-crook cares enough about a single piece of Chinese pottery (non-negotiable, remember) to take the chances Byng did to get this one?"

The chief threw up a pair of slender, nervous hands.

"Don't shoot," he answered, smiling. "I'm disarmed. Well, Val, you have my permission to send the cablegram. One thing, though: if Byng was and is as clever as you make him out, and as we've found him to be, what hope have you of getting him now?"

"I believe he's in Forge. And Forge (I've looked it up) is a town with less than two hundred thousand inhabitants; one of

the old small towns grown into a city with the discovery of oil there during the last decade."

"But what makes you think he's in Forge?"

"Because," answered Rudolf Valentine, smiling more boyishly than ever, "knowing my own country as I do and the little interest in art it takes as a general rule, I cannot imagine that story about the quarrel between the curator of the Forge Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Kershaw heir being printed in any other than the home-town paper. Now, sir, what do you think?"

His chief clapped him on the shoulder. "I think that if Harvey Byng is ever taken it will be by Rudolf Valentine, but I also think that Rudolf Valentine is going to have one deuce of a time doing it."

"But will he do it, sir?" asked Rudolf Valentine anxiously.

The other considered some time before speaking. "It's a toss-up, my dear fellow, a toss-up," he answered seriously. "It depends on whose side luck elects to stand, that's all."

CHAPTER SIX

IT was a cold, snowy day in December, a month or more after Rudolf Valentine had left London with such high hopes of capturing the rogue who had been too much for him, and who had continued to remain so. For the International Police official was no nearer his goal at ten minutes past ten on that particular morning than he had been for the past three years.

But at twenty minutes past the same hour all this was changed, and all because he had missed the last taxicab in front of the Mount Vernon Square Hotel.

As Valentine had an engagement with a certain collector of bijouterie at another hotel within the hour, he set out suddenly to walk there. As he plodded along, fur collar turned up, shovel-visored cap pulled down over eyes, he looked rather like a sulky boy sent by his elders on an unwelcome errand.

Because of a traffic block he was forced to a halt at a windy street corner where the snow ceased to fall vertically, but was driven in slanting sheets directly into the detective's face. He turned it away from the storm's buffets, crowding close to the nearest wall, and when he opened his eyes again encountered this legend in old English letters of gilt against black:

"CHARCOAL CLUB—ANNUAL EXHIBITION."

Now, as has been previously mentioned, it was cold and blowy, and Valentine was chilled to the bone, having walked a mile or more. Within this club it was doubtless warm and agreeable. Making his excuse for delaying the bijouterie collector the fact that he occasionally bought a picture by one of the rising generation of painters before their prices got beyond his purse, Valentine turned gratefully toward the warm and pleasing interior of the Charcoal Club.

"I had no more to do with it than I had with telephoning Lady MacQuarrie," he said afterwards, recounting his adventure to his chief. I went upstairs to look over the work of the younger New Jersey painters—those that the committee had thought worthy of being exhibited.

"I lingered over the pictures, trying to decide which one I would buy, and had finally decided upon a great golden galleon flying a huge scarlet mainsail, above it the gorgeous standard of Spain, both bellying out as the ship heeled over in a Caribbean gale. It was that one nearest my clue, which was contained in an unsigned painting entitled 'Compliments of the Camorra.'

"Instead of passing on to arrange for the purchase of my pirate picture, I took another look at 'Compliments of the Camorra.'

"As I looked my eyes bulged. Not at the central figure, that of a murderous Sicilian, although it was upon this that the artist had expended most of his effort.

"He stood at an open doorway, holding a huge brass candlestick in one hand, in the other a *misericorde,* that extraordinarily thin, keen sort of stiletto, with a crucifix of mother-of-pearl for its haft, its needle-like

point dyed scarlet, splotches of blood all the way up to the haft.

"So far nothing of peculiar interest, you will say. Quite so! But that was all I had seen on my first look. Now, however, I took in the *mis en scène,* and my heart began a furious rat-a-tat-tat, and a fine perspiration oozed out on forehead and palms.

"Mechanically wiping my brow with my handkerchief, I also passed it over my eyes as one does when he imagines he sees things that aren't there at all.

"For the light that streamed canary-yellow from the candle, whose flame fluttered forward in the wind illuminated a section of the floor, made of it, in fact, a path of yellow, in which lay the dead man, face downward, his right hand thrown out in front of him, his right foot thrust out behind him.

"And the hand clutched the head of a polar bear, on the skin of which the body lay, *and the tip of the right boot touched the head of a tiger skin."*

CHAPTER SEVEN

"DOESN'T look as though you were any nearer your man than you were for all his picture, or the one you *say* is his picture," the police commissioner of Forge said, smiling slyly. It was three days later at headquarters.

"Blast it all, man," exploded Valentine, "I *know* it was his picture. Don't I tell you that was the way poor old Crowland of Scotland Yard lay after Byng killed him, one hand extended——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the commissioner quickly. "You've explained all that, but doesn't it strike you as strange that so clever a crook as this Byng would have committed such a blunder? He, the fellow who never left a clue behind! Who arranged all those robberies in Europe so cleverly that he might have gone on forever if he hadn't been recognized by that man of yours? Who stepped out of his London lodgings just after that murder, with you at one door and your man at another, and disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him up? Who got out of England with——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Valentine irritably.

"And who, to come down to the present, impersonated this British baronet right here in Forge and got away with that 'peach-blow bubble' right under its owner's eyes? Does that sort of man strike you as one who would be such an utter stranger to prudence that he'd paint a dead give-away of himself and put it on exhibition for everybody to see?"

"I don't think he realized it *was* a dead give-away, as you call it," Valentine answered thoughtfully. "I think that, after the crime was committed, he stopped at the doorway of his flat at Gray's Inn and looked back. His conscious mind soon forgot what it had seen, but his subconsciousness registered every detail. And when he painted that picture his subconscious mind disgorged those details automatically without his conscious mind being in the least aware of their personal significance. It's not as if murdered men meant anything much to him. He'd seen too many killed in France, outside his personal or, I should say, private experiences. I can imagine him congratulating himself on the fecund imagination that invented so realistic a setting—the clutching hand and what it clutched, the outthrust foot and what it touched. It's not as if he had the slightest idea of painting the actual killing of Crowland. If he had, don't you see, he'd have taken the entire *mis en scène*—the book-lined, picture-hung walls, the collection of his beloved Chinese pottery on the fireplace overmantel, especially the latter, with his love for that sort of art."

This time the commissioner agreed. "True enough," he said. "The murdered man in this picture is wearing a braided frock coat, lavender trousers, and toothpick patent-leathers—all three of the sort nobody but a Latin would wear, not even a Gaul. Yes, what you say may be true—an unconscious betrayal of the subconscious mind. But if that's true, however," he added hastily, struck by a new thought,

"why was he so careful to hide his identity?"

"Nothing strange in that," Valentine answered promptly, "although it's hard luck for me. It's a usual enough way of sending certain types of paintings. There's the well-known painter who wants an unprejudiced idea of what his stuff's really worth. If his picture takes a prize the name's disclosed. If not it's sent for secretly. There's the artist with the high price who paints a poor picture or one not up to his usual standard, to say the least, and who knows he can't charge what he usually gets, so sends it in anonymously to get what he can for it. *He* can't afford to have *his* name known. Then there's the clever amateur who, knowing about the two previous types, takes to anonymity in the hope that his picture will be awarded a prize, or bought, or both, under the impression that it is the work of a well-known man. Now, this fellow Byng is just the sort of cunning chap to do a trick like that. Which would explain the anonymity easily enough without resorting to the idea that he was taking precautions.

"Of course he *might* be, at that," Valentine concluded, "but, however——"

"However, you haven't the slightest clue, for all that," finished the police commissioner with the same sly grin. "The great and august officer of International Police is stumped just as surely as our poor local policemen. The shipping and receiving clerk at the club remembers nothing about this particular painting except that he numbered it No. 87, and it came without identifying marks and was delivered by hand. The man who brought it wasn't from the express companies, or the Postal Telegraph, or the Western Union, and he wasn't a taxi chauffeur. Your advertisement, offering a reward of $25 to the man who delivered a painting to the Charcoal Club, has gone unanswered after three days. The man who sold the canvas has sold so many like it in the past year, and has had so many clerks who may have sold more, that he practically invites you to visit every painter in the State if you want to be sure. You and I and the president of the Charcoal Club have checked over the names of members of that organization and exhibitors, and every new one in the past three years is satisfactorily accounted for. Seventeen anonymous exhibitors of last year sent for the unsold paintings and still remain anonymous. Those who sold pictures and the one who took a prize discarded their anonymity. And there you are!"

To his surprise, Valentine smiled boyishly. "There I am," he agreed gaily.

"You don't take it much to heart," observed the police commissioner in surprise. "Considering the disappointments you've had in Forge, before and after you saw that picture, I should think you would be. Why aren't you?"

"I'm sure I don't know," was Valentine's answer. "But see here, my dear man, do you think two accidents of this sort are likely to happen without any meaning attached to them? Just when I was about to give Byng up for good I saw that press-clipping and called Lady MacQuarrie. That brought me to Forge. Just as I am about to give up again, after exhausting the resources here in your office and elsewhere, I walk upstairs at the Charcoal Club and see that painting. Now——"

"There's a fellow outside says he wants to see the captain here, and am I to show him in?" demanded an auburn-haired imp of an office boy suddenly swinging in with the inward swing of the door. "He looks like the boneyard to me. Gone color-blind lookin' at silver, nickel-and-diming himself with a bunch of lead pencils and a tin cup. He——"

"Never mind, you, Eustace," interrupted the commissioner severely. "Just send him in."

The person in question justified Eustace's description. He looked like one upon whom tuberculosis had worked its will without very much interference, and he smelled strongly of the cheapest sort of bootlegger's whisky.

"I don't know what my information's worth," he said sullenly, "but I was in at David's, the art supply dealer's, a few minutes ago, looking to be taken on, maybe, for the rush trade at Christmas, same's I was last year, but the dirty loafer turned

me down. I hear something about you wanting to know about the people who bought a certain kind of canvas. I looked that there picture over, and it was me sold it to him because I marked a memo in indelible ink in the corner, and it ain't erased yet. You noticed M N W 2 on it maybe?"

"Yes," answered Valentine eagerly. "What does it stand for? Are you the one who put it there?"

"Yes, I am," was the sullen reply, "but as for what it means, that's telling. I need the coin, old top, I need the coin. Gee, how I do need them big bright dollars. How about it?"

The man's condition was pitiable enough, anyhow, for all his attempt at jaunty gutter jazz, to justify charity, so Valentine's hand slipped into his pocket and then toward the stranger.

"That $10 is in case your story's worth nothing, just to repay your kindness in coming here," said the International officer sympathetically. At his tone the other's eyes clouded with tears. Valentine really cared about his fellowmen, really was sorry for them, and he invariably struck the human note. "If it's worth more——"

All the pitiable effort at insolence ceased.

"Say, you're one good guy, mister. I hope this here helps you. Honest, I do! Fellow comes into David's one night when I'm on alone; everybody else at supper. Buys tubes of paint, some fixatif, camels' hairs, red rub-off and a dozen of them canvases. 'Want 'em delivered?' ses I. 'Yes,' ses he. Then; 'No,' ses he, 'I don't, neither.' I does 'em up; pretty big bundle. Looks at it, an' ses he: 'Lookit! Got 'nengaget down street; don' wanna lug that there all over creayshun; tell you what: d'liver this t'me corner Martindale street and Second avenue, northwest corner, about 10:30, and I'll give you a coupla dollars. Live out in the country; can't wait for d'liv'ry. How 'bout it?' ses he. 'You're on, mister,' ses I. 'Here's taxi fare out there,' ses he. "Give you the deuce when I see you.' 'Noff he goes. When I gits there at 10:25 he's a-waiting. Jest takes the bundle, gives me the two-spot, says 'Thanks very much; g'night,' and beats it. Ses I: 'Don't look t'me like you live in no country, or you'd have a taxi yourself, or a car, or somepin', or else,' ses I, 'you'd have it brung to the railroad station. Looks like you live near here, mister, but don' wan' nobuddy t'know where you lived,' ses I. 'That's what it looks like t'me,' ses I."

"You said all this to him?" asked the police commissioner, eyeing the human derelict contemptuously.

But Rudolf Valentine's eyes glowed.

"He didn't say he said it to the man, commissioner," he put in extenuatingly. "He said the man went off, and that's what he thought, and mighty good reckoning, too. Thank you very much for coming. Will you take me to the corner of the two streets you named? Here——"

His hand strayed from his own pocket in the other's direction for the second time. The derelict looked at what had been transferred to him, stood transfixed for a second or so, then sank down, his lips quivering, his eyes streaming. If somewhat maudlin, he was nevertheless sincerely grateful.

"Will I? Will I take you to that corner? I'd take you clean through hell if you wanted, mister. Any time! A-n-y old time! Want we should go now?"

Valentine nodded and slipped into his beaver-lined sable-collared coat, pulling down the shovel-visored cap that matched the rough tweed outer cloth, as did his high-cut spats.

"Well, commissioner," he said, "I told you I didn't believe two such accidents could happen without a third. That is, if they *are* accidents."

"What are you going to do when you get to that corner?" asked the commissioner curiously. "Conduct a house-to-house search of the entire section. Better let me loan you half a dozen flatties, hadn't you?"

Valentine laughed happily.

"Quite unnecessary, commissioner. You see, I happen to know the brand of cigarettes he smokes. And as they are an exceptionally vile brand manufactured in New Orleans, and as there aren't likely to be half-a-dozen smokers of that brand in that section, I won't need half-a-dozen men, will I? But thank you just the same."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that the man probably met this friend of ours within a few blocks of where he lives. He probably buys his cigarettes within that same radius. Now, there is, on an average, about one shop selling cigarettes to two square blocks in the sparsely settled sections like that one, if I recall my topography correctly. I shall call at each tobacco shop or drugstore, as the case may be, inquire as to whom buys the 'Strike Out' cigarettes, and make a personal call on every gentleman who does. One of them will be Harvey Byng, the rogue, ex-captain Foreign Legion, also ex-captain of Anzacs, and plunderer extraordinary."

Valentine laughed happily, boyishly, and explored the section under his left arm-pit where swung a certain hooded weapon which, although noiseless, was as capable of as much destruction of life and defense of it as the noisier sort.

"Quite a job, isn't it?" asked the commissioner doubtfully.

"Considering that not one man in a thousand, say, smokes that cigarette, and that whoever sells it in that section has probably ordered it and kept it in stock for Monsieur le Capitaine Byng—no, commissioner, no!"

He moved toward the door, gently urging the derelict who had been listening, mouth agape, and who now moved like an automaton.

"And considering that, as our friend says, no one who lived in the country would have had his bundle delivered out there; considering also the cost of two dollars plus taxi fare for the sort of delivery his wish to remain anonymous cost him, I don't think there is any doubt of the fact that, when you see me next, it will be in the company of that much-wanted person, Mr. Byng."

He went out.

"Well, I'm hanged," observed the commissioner to the chandelier.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IT was the sort of shop one finds in the two-story house neighborhoods, the sort of shop over and behind which its owner lives, and which, except at the rush hours, is apt to appear totally deserted, the shopkeeper and his wife and elder children having private business to attend to outside, at the back, or upstairs. The sort of shop that sells everything the drugstore sells except drugs, which nowadays have become a minor matter with the shops presided over by graduates of pharmacy—magazines, ice-cream and soda-water, confectionery, stationary, tobacco and cigarettes.

Incidentally it was the fourth shop that Rudolf Valentine had visited since dismissing the derelict with the admonition that he purchase immediately a warm, woolly, second-hand overcoat; his cough was too hacking to keep him trotting along on frozen pavements or wading through snowdrifts.

Visiting three shops at intervals of five blocks in such a neighborhood on such a day when the east wind blew brazen and bitter was no particularly pleasurable task, especially when one has another failure staring him in the face as had Valentine. He therefore entered this fourth one, scowling.

A man stood behind the magazine counter with his back to possible customers, apparently sorting the magazines that hung by hooks on the wall above.

Valentine assumed he was the proprietor, and so addressed him. That is, he addressed his back, and did it somewhat sulkily. After all, he was accustomed to speaking to shopkeepers' faces, not their backs.

"Do you keep 'Strike Out' cigarettes?" he desired to know, but in the hopeless tone of one who realizes he will receive a negative answer.

The man behind the counter put a hand to his head and, had his face been turned that way, the International man might have seen him rub his hair somewhat reflectively, it seemed, producing an appearance somewhat similar to one who wears bangs.

"Yep," he answered in a coarse, thick voice, and continued his fiddling with the magazines, rearranging them, it was now apparent, according to some inchoate scheme he seemed to have in mind. "Want a pack, huh?"

But he did not turn.

"No," returned Valentine with a little

shudder, "I smoke Demachrino's. I'll take a package of those."

"So do I smoke 'em; good cigarette—hey?" answered and inquired the man behind the counter. "Wait a minute till I finish what I'm doin' here, or help yourself. Behind the other counter. Help yourself if you're in a hurry. Twenty cents. I thought you asked for 'Strike Outs,' though. There's one bum cigarette."

"Why do you keep them, then?" demanded Valentine eagerly.

"Got a coupla calls for 'em; one fella buys 'em by the carton—coupla centuries at a time. Comes seven blocks to get 'em, too. Storekeeper up his way wasn't obligin' when he first ast for 'em, and, what's more, gi' him the 'ha-ha' for smokin' sich a cheap brand. So he ups and comes here. Other fella jest happened to see 'em in stock, and smokes 'em 'cause they're cheap. He's a skinflint; 's got th' first dollar he ever made; married it and took it to the altar with him. He wouldn't trade a biscuit for a barrel of flour, that guy. Wouldn't give the Lord a prayer——"

"He's not the one I'm looking for," Valentine broke in, trembling with eagerness. "The carton one? Where's he live?"

The other fished out his hat, apparently from beneath the counter, but actually from where it had fallen on the floor. "Why," said he, turning up his coat collar as he turned his face toward the other, revealing puckered lips that looked thick, somewhat distended cheeks, and hair that was rumpled and untidy and that, hiding his forehead, gave a final touch of coarseness and lack of intelligence—"why, I'm goin' in that direction myself, mister, and if you wanta come along, why, all right."

He opened the door, which Valentine had left as he found it, ajar, and the two passed out without the bell connection that warned those at the back of the entrance or exit of a customer being disturbed. But his companion yelled "Ma-ri-ar," apparently to some one in the rear, on leaving.

"What kind of a man is this fellow who buys those cigarettes by the carton?" Valentine continued, questioning.

"Him? That fellow?" he queried in the same coarse, thick voice. "Oh, he's one of these here stuck-up dudes. Thinks it's tony to carry a cane. Bet he'd be carryin' one even on a mornin' like this. Dunno what he does 'xactly, but the lady that washes his close's husbing's a customer o' mine, buys his chewin' and smokin' off'n me, too, and he says this fella, fer all he smokes sich cheap 'roots,' has one swell place overta Newington Place. Swell rugs and picters, speshul pictures, fer that's prob'ly his bis'-ness if he's got any. Drawin' 'em or paintin' em, I dunno which, fer these here magazines, I guess. But nobuddy never comes ta see him, she says; so her husbing tells me, and so I dunno. Dresses swell, though; good materials, rich they are, but no style, bo, no style. Plain as a church, nothin' natty like you see in the store winders downtown. Well, gotta leave you here. You go down this here street four blocks till you come ta Newington Place, then go three blocks east and stop at 831. That's him. Name of Andrews. That your man?"

"Yes," replied Valentine readily. "Andrews is the name. I'm much obliged to you, sir. Good-day."

And he set off with a high heart, whistling jubilantly. Freezing east wind and slippery pavements were forgotten now. He reached under his left arm-pit. He was going to get Byng. At last!

CHAPTER NINE

LESS than half an hour later Valentine was back at the little shop with murder in his heart. The bell tinkled as he opened the door this time, and a little undersized harassed-looking man stood behind the white-slabbed counter where ice-cream and soda-water was served in summer, hot coffee or chocolate in winter, and sandwiches at all times.

He was sorting out sandwiches now, placing them on plates beneath bell-like glass covers, and he looked up inquiringly into the hot and angry face of Detective Valentine.

"Where's the proprietor?" the latter demanded beween shut teeth.

"I'm the proprietor," the little undersized man answered apologetically. "What did you wish to see me about?"

For the moment it seemed to Valentine that his heart was standing still. Then he demanded swiftly:

"Who was the man in here about twenty or twenty-five minutes ago—by himself? Tall, long coat, slouch hat. He——"

"Did he have on a beautiful black-and-purple-striped tie, sir?" asked the little man. "And a——"

"Couldn't see. Turned his coat collar up. But——"

"Was he looking over the magazines?"

Valentine nodded dumbly. The man reached down and brought up a beautifully polished teakwood stick, slim as a wand, with a plain hexagon-shaped gold top, the sort a continental dandy might have carried.

"He left this lying on the floor behind there," the man explained. "That's Mr. Day, sir, an artist who——"

But Valentine had snatched the stick and was examining the golden top, which was marked in plain Gothic letters: "H. B." In minute script on the base of one facet appeared: "Cartier Frères."

"These initials are 'H. B.' You say his name is 'Day'?" He spoke sharply. He had had enough deception for one day.

"'Day' or 'Bay'; I'm not sure, sir. He just comes in here to buy magazines and cigarettes."

"What kind?" snapped Valentine.

The little undersized man laughed placatingly. "Why, sir, it doesn't seem possible, but for all his grand ways in everything else, and the money he throws away on magazines, and gives to the kids to go to the movies, and——"

"What kind of cigarette does he smoke?" thundered Valentine. "Answer me. Don't waste my time."

"Why, sir, 'Strike Outs' is the name. He——"

"My God!" groaned Valentine. But there was no time for repining. "Do you know where he lives?"

"Why, yes, sir," answered the little man, trembling. "My little Johnny has carried——"

"Look here, my man. I'm a police officer chasing a crook. Your Mr. Day, or Mr. Bay, is the crook. I haven't any time to listen to what little Johnny did or didn't do. Is he here?"

"Yes, sir; just going back to school after dinner. He——"

"Send him in here immediately. I want him to take me to where this fellow lives."

"Certainly, sir. But you won't need Johnny for that, although I'm perfectly willing to have him go. You see that house high up on that hill with all that ground and trees around it? It's the only one of the old aristocratic houses left in this section and——"

"He lives there?"

"Yes, sir."

No bullet could have left a rifle or arrow a bow-string any more accurately aimed at the house in question than Valentine left the little shop. The place in question was directly opposite, set well back from the street and perched on a hilltop. One must negotiate an iron gate, which Valentine found locked, before one might enter the grounds at all, or else climb the spear-head railing.

This last the I. P. man did, with the assistance of a passer-by.

The house was indubitably old, antedating the Civil War, a well-preserved and repaired model of Queen Anne cottage. Valentine crossed the porch and tried the paneled white door. It, too, was locked, which necessitated his first trying the windows, only to find them in like case, and then dashing around to the back, where behind some lattice-work he found the kitchen door.

Upon this, also locked, he thundered until a scared woman in widow's black opened it, wiping her hands on her discarded apron. To her Valentine paid no heed, but dashed through kitchen and dining-room and drawing-room, all of which he found empty.

It was dark inside, and such lights as there were filtered through stained glass shades, but he found the Turkey-carpeted,

brass-rodded stairway, and ran noiselessly up.

He threw open door after door, only to find they opened on empty rooms. Only two were furnished as bedrooms, one of which was undisturbed. The other showed signs of some hasty packing.

He searched the closets, the bathroom, the alcoves, any place capable of concealing a man, his electric torch in one hand, his hooded pistol in the other, but the rooms remained as lonely and as silent as before.

He took the final flight in two leaps, a short steep one. It opened directly on a big studio. All the partitions between attic rooms had been taken out and frosted glass replaced the shingles of one side of a great gable. In this room, under glass, he saw, at a cursory glance, more than one seemingly priceless *objet-d'art* of the sort he had expected to see—Chinese porcelain. The lower portions of the walls, like the stairway leading to the room, were crowded with paintings, pastels, oils, water-colors. There were etchings, too, and charcoal studies, and what-not.

But with these, as with the rich tapestries and hangings, he was too busy just then to deal, except to pull every hanging aside to see what it concealed, open every door, explore every nook and corner, until not even a mouse might have gone unconcealed, let alone a man.

He paused, exhausted and out of breath, to turn swiftly at the sound of steps on the stairs. Creeping cautiously to the doorway, he peered out between the crack of the door.

The woman in widow's weeds—she wore her bonnet and veil now—was making her way up, slowly and laboriously. In one hand she held a letter, which, as he showed himself, thrusting the gun into his coat pocket, she extended toward him.

"Mr. Horace Bay said you'd call and for me to give you this. I hope there ain't anything wrong, sir; he went off in such a hurry that I——"

She continued talking, but Valentine heard nothing. His eyes were avidly intent on the sheet of paper he had plucked forth from its sealed envelope:

"My Dear Valentine: You are a very dear Valentine to me, for this is the second collection of paintings and potteries you have cost me.

"In fact, you are getting to be entirely too dear, too expensive a luxury for a poor man, so the next time you break in upon my peaceful home life I shall have to do without you in the future.

"So dear are you getting, my dear Valentine, that I can no longer afford you. It may interest you to know that your present intrusion has forced me back into 'ways that are dark and tricks that are mean.' I was foolish enough to buy the house in which you stand, and you can see that furnishings and paintings and potteries cost me a pretty penny. Books, too; my collection of editions *de luxe* and first editions alone cost me upwards of ten or twelve thousand.

"I could have kept them all by killing you. And I *could* have killed you easily enough to-day by leading you to my house and making away with you, but my squeamishness prevented me. I don't know why. So I hurried home, put a few things into a bag, and—I'm off again.

"You'll soon hear of me through the newspapers. *But lay off me.* I can't spare any more collections. Believe me, I'm serious. Here I am, homeless again, without a thing in the world except what I carry in a bag or two: one already packed, the other with what I could get into it in the few minutes' grace I had.

"So the next time I see you I shall kill you. *Au 'voir.* Byng.

"P. S. Remember in dealing with gentry like myself that one has only to cover the forehead, purse the lips, dilate the cheeks, and press the jowls hard down on the collar to appear a repulsive ruffian.

"Fortunately for me, when you entered that shop I saw you through the window, disposed of my hat and stick, and turned my back, also flipped up my coat collar at the back. A careless boy had left the door ajar, so the real proprietor, who leaves me to browse among the magazines, neither knew of your arrival or departure.

"Keep the stick with my compliments.

"H. B.

"P. P. S. Remember you are responsible for forcing me back into the ways of the ungodly. Whoever I am compelled to rob, therefore, will owe his loss to your damned interference. So long, Valentine. B."

So intent had Valentine been on the note that he had not noticed that the woman had withdrawn from the room. The key was on the outside of the door. She turned it.

She also turned the stop-cock of an affair that had been propped up in the corner and hidden by the opened door. The slight hissing noise that followed on the inside was drowned by the sound of the escaping steam from the radiator, an arrangement which had also gone unnoticed while he read.

His nose gave him the first warning, awakening a certain cell of his brain where his war reminiscences were neatly docketed.

"Sm-smells li-like ga-gas," he muttered. "Wha-what ki-nd they ca-call it? I——"

He put one hand up. Then he let it drop. His knees weakened; he swayed and dropped to them. Kneeling drunkenly, his body continued to sway. Slower and slower grew the swaying until it ceased altogether and he fell sideways, bruising his face against the pedestal that supported a bust of Byron.

He lay there for a long time. The atmosphere of the room resembled a London fog. The woman, waiting outside, finally threw open the door, then ran as for her life, throwing up windows on the lower floor to create a draft.

A quarter-hour later she returned with something in her hand that gleamed when the light from an overhead arc fell on it. She knelt, rolled up the unconscious man's sleeve, and injected a syringe of solution above the elbow.

Then, gathering up the body in her surprisingly strong arms, she carried it downstairs and locked it in one of the rooms, empty save for the army cot on which she laid it.

A few hours later the other rooms were as empty. Emptier, for there were no cots in them. The removal of the furniture was directed by the woman, who was paying war-time prices for speed.

When the last article was on its way and she was alone in the house again, she unlocked the door to the room in which Valentine lay. Opening a cupboard, she took out an assortment of male clothing, a make-up box, unguents, cosmetics—all the appurtenances necessary for a complete change of costume and appearance.

After removing her female attire she, for a few moments or more, bore a strange resemblance to the much-wanted Harvey Byng, but this soon passed. By the time she was fully dressed again she looked like a devil-may-care youth of twenty-five or so, the sort who lounges on street corners and believes he would be a hit in the movies.

He paused before making his final exit to pin a paper on Valentine's lapel. It read:

"I couldn't afford to lose the collection, after all. You really ought to study faces. Three times you have stood face to face with me and failed to recognize me: first at Gray's Inn when I was a retired staff officer; second, at the little shop; the third time when I handed you my own note in the studio.

"Affectionately,

"HARVEY BYNG."

The ODOR of ARBUTUS

by Charles E. Thurston

IT was past eleven o'clock, and none of the card players bent over the little round tables ranged against the walls of Mozo's wine saloon showed signs of leaving. So absorbed were they in their games that no one noticed that a stranger had entered the big room and had sauntered to the stove in the back.

Suddenly one of the players began sniffing. Another soon imitated his example. They looked at one another inquiringly. Where did that odor come from? What was it?

The first whiff was deliciously sweet—not unlike the delicate fragrance emitted by the trailing arbutus in the early spring. The second whiff, still delightfully pleasing, had about it a peculiar effect that filled one with a sudden desire, a yearning, a craving to inhale more of the exquisite fragrance. The third whiff was apt to set one coughing, as it affected the man who had been sleeping at the stove when the stranger entered.

The smell did not last long. The only one who seemed to be annoyed by it was the cougher. Rising from his chair and clenching his fists, he said in a subdued tone of voice:

"If you brought that odor in here look out for yourself. I know that smell only too well."

Very calmly the stranger, a handsome young man, with thick wavy hair, a thick beard, and dark, close-set eyes, took out a cigarette and proceeded to light it. The hand holding the match had three deep scars running parallel to each other across the back of it.

The little man, who a moment ago seemed eager for a quarrel, suddenly shrank back. His eyes dilated and glared with terror. His fists opened and his claw-like fingers shook as though with the palsy. With a sudden effort he wrenched himself out of the shriveling stare of the stranger and hastened out of the saloon.

"Say," said a thin-faced man, sidling up to the stranger, "I heard what that guy said to you. Why did he beat it the way he did? I thought you were in for a scrap."

The man with the three scars on his right hand smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and sat down on a vacant chair near by. The thin-faced man knit his brows uneasily.

"Look-ahere, Buddy," he said after a lengthy pause, during which he scrutinized the stranger very closely, "I put the question to yuh. Ain't I good enough to be answered?"

"Have a seat," said the stranger, motioning to a chair on the other side of the table. The thin-faced man obeyed. Taking a silver cigarette case out of his vest pocket, the stranger opened it and invited him to take a cigarette. The invitation was not refused.

"May I ask you who that man was who left me a minute ago?"

"Sure. That was Mike Fabrini. He's a shoemaker. He has a place right around the corner—in the basement."

"Was he always a shoemaker?" inquired the stranger.

"I understand he used to be connected with an animal show. When he lost his wife, five years ago, he gave up a job that paid him about a hundred dollars a year and started making shoes."

"How did his wife die?"

"That's a mystery. His wife disappeared. He had several hundred dollars in the bank and spent every cent of it to locate her, but he never saw her and never heard of her again."

"That's funny," said the stranger; "any clues?"

"No. When she left him on the morning of her disappearance she said she was going to see Luigi's grandmother."

"And who is Luigi's grandmother?"

"That's as great a mystery as her strange disappearance."

The stranger lapsed into silence. Fixing his black eyes on the thin-faced man, he asked in almost a whisper:

"Are you well acquainted with Fabrini?"

"I used to work for him."

"For any length of time?"

"About three years."

"During that time did Fabrini ever have strange visitors?"

"Come to think of it, I remember his having three. Each of them was dressed in swell clothes, wore big diamonds on their fingers, and seemed to be race-track touts or theatrical people. One of them I remember quite well. He gave me a dollar tip for doing him a little favor."

"Was it the dollar that makes you remember him?"

"No. I'll never forget that guy, because after he went Fabrini acted like a crazy man. He walked around his shop like a caged lion, broke furniture, and tore apart shoes that were left for him to repair. Then he started drinking hootch, keeping at it until he was dead drunk."

"What kind of a man was he?" asked the stranger.

"He was a big man with a fat face and——" He peered and peered at the man on the other side of the table with a frightened look in his eyes.

"And what?" demanded the stranger peremptorily.

"He had——" He again paused and bit his lip.

"Speak," demanded the stranger, seizing his wrist and holding it with a grasp of iron.

"He had three scars on his right hand just like yours."

"And what of it?"

"Fabrini said it was the mark of Luigi's grandmother."

The stranger looked at him a moment and burst out in a roar of laughter. Still chuckling, he said: "My, but Luigi's grandmother must be a gentle old lady."

This sally disabused the thin-faced man of his apprehensions, and he dropped his eyes, ashamed of himself. Looking up, smiling, he said: "It does sound funny, doesn't it?"

The stranger continued to chuckle.

"But it is a strange coincidence that you should have scars on your hand just as did the other man." After a pause he added: "I wonder why Fabrini acted so strangely just before he went out?"

"Say, young fellow," said the stranger suddenly, not paying any attention to the question, "I like you. What's your name?"

"My name is Joe Pastore."

"Working?"

"Chauffeur. Run a taxicab."

"How about a job that would pay you fifty dollars a week?"

Pastore looked at him quizzically and grinned. "Say, quit yuh kidding, there ain't no such animal. That includes the tips."

"If you give satisfaction you are apt to make it a hundred and more—a hundred and more, do you get me?"

Pastore whistled. "I'd lie or rob for that amount."

"If Fabrini is found missing to-morrow morning, will you keep your mouth shut about meeting me?"

These words were uttered so lowly that he had to push his head far forward to hear them. When he sensed the full purport of them he withdrew his head and turned deathly pale.

"Put your hand under the table," ordered the stranger.

He obeyed and felt the cold steel of a revolver. Chills coursed up and down his back, and he drew back his hand as though the fingers had come in contact with a hot stove.

"Listen, Pastore," said the stranger, after casting a furtive glance about him, "to-morrow Fabrini dies a suicide; at least that is what the police will believe. If you dare to open your mouth you follow him; do you get me."

Cold perspiration gathered on the brow of Joe Pastore. He was no coward, but he felt himself cornered, and he realized that there was nothing to be gained by resistance, so he quietly submitted.

The stranger arose from his chair. After putting away his gun he stuck out his hand to Pastore, took it with the air of one who was doing something he had to do.

"I'll see you in the lobby of the Ritz to-morrow night at ten o'clock. Bring with you all the details of Fabrini's death. Keep your ears open and listen to what folks in the neighborhood have to say, and hang around the police sufficiently to get an idea of what they think of the matter."

When he was gone Pastore made a sudden resolution. He would warn Fabrini. As soon as he was sure enough time elapsed for the stranger to get out of the neighborhood he left Mozo's and hastened in the direction of Fabrini's shoe shop. Just before reaching it he looked up and down the street. Everything was quiet. The tall tenement houses, save for a lighted window or two here and there, rose on either side of him like black walls. The show windows, pursuant to the orders of the police, were faintly illuminated by low-turned gasjets, but so still was everything that Pastore could not help but feel that he was the only man in the locality.

He descended the steps that led to Fabrini's shop. The door was open. He entered cautiously and lit a match. The sight that struck his eyes made him gasp and drop the match. On the floor, sprawled on his back, lay Fabrini.

Several minutes passed before he could muster up enough courage to light another match. Just as he was about to do so, however, he paused. Suppose he was caught by the police alone with a dead man. They would accuse him of the crime. They would send him to Sing Sing and the electric chair. He shuddered at the horrible thought.

He felt his way to the door. His hand came into contact with something that blocked his way. His hand clutched cloth—the coat sleeve of a man. He emitted a cry and fell back. The light of a match flashed. Before him stood the stranger, gun in hand, calmly smoking a cigarette.

"Thought you'd do a little double-crossing, eh?" he sneered. At this he threw open his coat and showed a silver badge. "Pull yourself together; you're pinched—arrested on the charge of murder."

Taking out of his pocket a whistle, he gave three loud blasts. In doing so he was obliged to throw away his match. Pastore saw his opportunity and grasped it. He leaped toward the stranger, struck him on the side of the head, and dashed up the stairs just as a policeman was turning the corner not far above. Realizing that flight would mean betrayal, he removed his coat and joined the disturbed people of the block who had been awakened by the whistle and who were all eager to learn what had happened.

Several police arrived on the spot.

"Who blew that whistle?" demanded a blue-coat emerging from the basement after making an investigation. Pastore listened to these words, as though he could not believe his ears. "Who blew that whistle?" demanded the policeman again.

What happened to the plain-clothes man? he asked himself. What reason did he have

for running away? It was easy for him to get away through a back door, but why on earth should a policeman do such a thing, anyhow? He thought of the three scars on his hand; he thought of the interview he had with him not long ago, and he concluded that the man was not an officer of the law, but a criminal—a criminal of the worst kind. He blew the whistle to shunt off the penalty of the crime to some one else, Joe Pastore being the goat.

No one suspected him of the crime any more than they did any of the other numerous bystanders hanging about. Feeling himself free, he went home and to bed.

The following morning while lying lazily on his bed thinking of the events of the night before his eye drifted to the threshold of the door. A piece of paper caught his attention; some one evidently had placed it there from outside. He jumped out of bed and snatched it up. Unfolding it, he read:

"JOE PASTORE: Your meddling has made it necessary for me to do away with one more man than I originally intended. I thought that Fabrini's death would permit me to retire with the comfort and happiness that is rightfully mine. Now I am obliged to get you before I can do so.

"Yours truly,

"LUIGI'S GRANDMOTHER."

Pastore sniffed. He was aware of a delicate fragrance not unlike that emitted by the trailing arbutus. He took a second whiff, and became infused with a mad desire that made him bury his nose in the note. He began to cough, and did not stop until he fell to the floor exhausted. When he recovered he felt a tickling sensation on his cheek and tried to brush it away. Looking at his hand, he saw flakes of caked blood. On the floor there was a black puddle; he had coughed himself into a hemorrhage.

Feeling very weak, he rose to his feet and staggered to the bed. For a long while he lay on the bed absolutely motionless, but not asleep. An hour later there was a rap on the door. He got up and opened the door. It was Hogan, his foreman.

"Say, phat's the matter wid yuh," he exclaimed, seeing Pastore still in his night shirt. "Didn't I tell yuh to be around early this morning. I ought to thrash the likes of you fur disap'intin' me."

"Come in," said Pastore; "I want to talk to yuh."

"And phat's eating yuh?" said the foreman, coming into the room.

"Say, Hogan," began Pastore, "I want you to give me some advice. Last night Fabrini was killed. I know the man who committed the crime. What should I do?"

Hogan's eyes opened wide.

"And it's murder yuh speakin' of?" he remarked, catching his breath.

At this Pastore told everything that had happened and ended by showing him the note.

Hogan listened attentively. At times his eyes almost popped out of his head, and often he scratched his red head, completely mystified. While Pastore was talking he was continually making exclamations, and when he finished he stood with his arms folded, wagging his head, without a word to say. Suddenly he found his tongue.

"By the way, Joe, I have a brother-in-law. His name is Pat Galligan. He's a rotten poker player—I beat him every time I play with him—but he's a whipper-snapper of a detective. How would it be if you told him about it?"

Pastore brightened. "And will he treat me white?"

"Huh," expostulated Hogan peevishly, his eyes flashing. "Do you think a brother-in-law of mine would double-cross a friend of mine?"

Pastore proceeded to dress. Hogan took out a little clay pipe and filled it with tobacco. He scratched a match, and paused long enough to let it go out. His attention was attracted by voices that came through the open door from below. A moment later he heard heavy footsteps on the stairs.

"Suffering saints!" ejaculated Hogan, rising from his seat as he saw a heavy-built man suddenly appear in the doorway; there were two men in blue uniforms behind him. "Say, Pat Galligan, and phat is

it that you are wantin' from respectable people?"

Galligan took the cigar that he was smoking out of his mouth and surveyed his brother-in-law quizzically. Pastore stared at him and turned deathly white. There was something so heartless, so relentless, so formidable in the broad, heavy-jawed countenance of the detective that he felt he was a doomed man.

"You Joe Pastore?" asked the detective, nodding in the direction of the little white-faced Italian.

"And he's a frind of mine," said Hogan defiantly.

"Well, Joe Pastore," added the detective, "you're under arrest, accused of the murder of Fabrini." Turning to one of the policemen: "Put on the bracelets, Schmidt, and take him over to the station-house. I'll follow you in a few minutes."

Pastore showed no resistance; he permitted them to put on the handcuffs without a murmur. Just as he was about to leave the room a young girl of about twenty, who had been standing within hearing, emerged from the obscurity of the hallway.

"Joe," she exclaimed, seizing his arm with both of her hands, "tell me, is it true that you did what they say?"

He raised his head and, fixing his eyes on hers, answered very sadly but firmly: "I did not kill Fabrini; I swear it before God."

She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him several times. The policemen showed little sympathy, and with a jerk of the handcuffed arm one sneered impatiently: "Cut it out. We ain't got all day!"

The girl watched Pastore go down the stairs. She stopped to see him disappear in the hallway below. Then burying her head in her arms and leaning against the wall, she sobbed convulsively.

"Look here, kiddo," said the detective, placing his hand on her shoulder; "I'd like to talk to you for a moment."

"Leave me alone," exclaimed the girl, trying to shake his huge paw from her shoulder. Her slender shoulders shook convulsively as she burst into another fit of sobbing.

"Listen, miss," said the detective more gently and removing his hand from her fragile form, "your sweetheart ain't guilty of crime until he has been tried before a court of justice. I'm not anxious to cause you any unecessary embarrassment, but I think that you may help him if you tell us all you know."

She began rubbing her eyes with her right hand, but still kept her left arm against the wall.

"Galligan wants to help you, Miss Ruggiero," purred Hogan sympathetically. "Ain't that right, Galligan," he added, turning to the detective, winking his eye and nudging his big brother-in-law in the ribs.

"Of course, Miss Ruggiero," chimed the detective, imitating Hogan's sympathetic bearing. "Just bear in mind, my brother-in-law here, Mike Hogan, is a friend of your sweetie. A friend of Mike is a friend of mine; do you get me?"

The girl slowly turned about and threw her large, tear-stained beautiful black eyes trustingly on the man who had arrested her lover. At the sight of the oval face framed in wavy black hair and filled with all the tenderness, sweetness, and sadness of a Murillo Madonna, the detective caught his breath and bit his lip with a sudden revulsion of feelings.

"Ask me anything, anything," she said, "and I will answer as well as I can."

The detective uneasily fingered the note that Hogan had given him. "Do you know if Joe Pastore has a grandmother living?"

She shook her head. "As much as I know all of Joe's relatives are dead. His father died in Italy two years ago."

"How do you account for this?" asked Galligan, handing her the note and pointing to the signature.

She gave it a glance and scowled. Biting her lip, she looked off into space and seemed to be suddenly divested of all power of speech. Hogan, noticing her hand trembling and her face turning ashy gray, seized her arm, fearing that she would faint. She pulled her arm away from his grasp and collected herself.

"Do you know," she said, her eyes contracting to incandescent pin-points, "that

Fabrini during the past year has received several notes signed by that same name."

"And how do you know that?" asked the detective to lead her on.

"Why, Mr. Fabrini was my uncle, and he told me almost everything."

"When did he receive the first of these notes?"

"The day his wife died."

"What!" exclaimed Galligan sharply, hating to be reminded of the baffling, unsolved mystery that had almost driven him to distraction. The girl, misunderstanding his motives, threw back her head and tightened her lips.

"I beg your pardon," stammered Galligan, coloring slightly, "but I can't think of that case without getting raw. You know I was on the case and almost went into consumption trying to run down the criminal. It's five years ago that Mrs. Fabrini was killed, and I haven't yet lived down the mortification it caused me."

The girl scrutinized the note. She looked up suddenly, her eyes beaming. "The person who wrote this wrote the ones that were sent to my uncle," she said.

"How do you know?" demanded Galligan.

"All of the notes have the same peculiar smell."

He took the note and was about to place it to his nostrils.

"Don't," she cried suddenly; "that odor is fatal."

Galligan looked at her and smiled.

"And she's telling the truth, Pat," broke in Hogan; "it's the smell that knocked Pastore flat on his back."

Galligan was incredulous. He folded the note and put it in a wallet.

"I'll have a chemist analyze it; but to tell you the truth, I think, miss, you are trying to kid me."

The girl threw back her head haughtily at this, but said nothing.

"I'll have to be running off now," said Galligan. "I'll see you later. Come along, Hogan; drive me over to the station-house. I know you have your flivver downstairs."

Hogan sidled up to the girl and said in a hoarse whisper: "Leave it to Galligan. He'll do what he can for you and Joe. If he doesn't I'll tell my wife. He's as much afraid of her as I am."

For a week after the death of Fabrini little Francesca Ruggiero found her time so taken up by detectives, lawyers, and other minions of the law that not once was she able to make her appearance at the office where she was employed as a stenographer.

Being the sole heir to her uncle, Pasquale, she found herself in possession of a small shoeshop that was not worth much and—it almost took her off her feet when she heard of it—in possession of a fortune of twenty-five thousand dollars. She always knew that her uncle had money, but she could not understand why he lived in squalor as he did and why he always pleaded even to his most intimate friends that he was on the verge of poverty. He had kept his money in a small savings bank in Yonkers, and for five years did not add or draw a cent. Why he maintained such secrecy about his savings was quite beyond her understanding, unless it was because of blackmailers.

The trial of Joe Pastore was a short one. Though Galligan tried hard to save him, he could not do so. A man named Miglio testified to having seen him descend the steps that led to Fabrini's shop. On the walls were found fingerprints that were unquestionably those of Pastore. Another man testified to having seen Pastore running into a doorway, and a third declared that he had seen him remove his coat, throw it behind an ash can, and enter the crowd of inquisitive bystanders.

His story would have saved him, perhaps, if he had not mentioned anything about the odor—the odor that smelled like the sweetest perfume in the first whiff and ended by bringing on a hemorrhage. This was too much for the court to believe. In the hands of the prosecuting attorney it was made to look so ridiculous that every one was convulsed with laughter. The judge had to rap several times to get silence. When order was restored two or three of the jurymen were wiping their eyes and several kept biting their lips to restrain their swelling chuckles.

When Francesca heard the death sentence

she collapsed. Finally she came to and stared and grinned as though she had lost her mental balance. Very fortunately, however, she wrenched herself out of this condition. With a violent impulse she rose to her feet, glared defiantly at the court officials that stood about her, and raised her clenched fists to the level of her lips and said:

"I am seriously handicapped by my sex. Yet, in spite of my skirts, I am going to prove that Joe Pastore is as innocent as a babe. I inherited twenty-five thousand dollars—a big sum and one that is overflowing with wonderful possibilities to a young girl like me. With it I could buy diamonds, I could buy beautiful hats and dresses, I could buy a flashing machine and live in the swellest hotels in this city. But," she paused, "I'll use every cent of it if I have to to prove that Joe Pastore never committed that crime."

That evening while lying on her bed she thought of the black tin box in which Fabrini kept all his personal papers. Jumping out of the bed, she got it and with sudden dismay observed that it was locked. She recalled that her uncle kept the key in a drawer of the desk she had appropriated for her own use. Running to the desk, she quickly procured the key and opened the box.

Sitting on the bed, she began reading. The first paper was a newspaper clipping, telling of Fabrini's fearlessness as a lion tamer. He loved that clipping and often read and dreamed over it. The next was a note written in Italian from a brother in Naples; it was extremely bulky, but full of nothing but commonplaces.

Here followed several bills, every one receipted. Just as she was beginning to get tired of her task she picked up an envelope, extremely crumpled. She removed the contents and tried to read it. It was not in English, nor was it in Italian. It was written in code and signed by Luigi. She put this aside for closer study. She came upon some more bills, a love letter from his wife, written while she was keeping company with him and couched in the sweetest and tenderest protestations of love. Then she came upon another note written in code. It had a recent date and differed from the other in having a postscript as follows: "Lou Ryan is dead; Uncle Joe has followed him; Issy Cole breathed his last; Giovani Fabrini is next."

She read this over several times, and she noticed that the first letters of the four names spelled Luigi. She lapsed into thought. To complete the word Luigi one more letter was necessary. It was I. The writer of the letter was a man whose name began with I, she concluded. He might be the murderer of her uncle.

She set this paper aside, and resuming her task, came upon some more bills, and then her eye fell upon a long manilla envelope. It bore no address and was sealed with wax. Her first impulse was to tear open the envelope, but she set it aside instead.

Next she found a letter from her aunt; she quickly recognized the small, delicate chirography of Fabrini's wife, who had strangely disappeared a year ago.

"My Beloved: I accept your proposal under certain conditions which are as follows:

"You must give up your profession as a lion tamer.

"You must have nothing more to do with that dog Illington or any of his associates.

"You must devote yourself to some humble trade that will permit us to live where we can set our past far behind us.

"If you agree to these conditions I will consent to be your wife—honor you and love you until Death fixes his icy finger upon my heart.

"With love and many kisses,

"Agnes."

She kissed the letter and wiped away a tear that had come to her eye. To her the aunt was always everything that was good, sweet, and beautiful. A kinder heart she had never met with in all her life; she had lost her parents when she was still young. A gentler soul she had never known. As to beauty, her aunt seemed the very paragon of pulchritude.

She put the letter into her bosom and picked up the three remaining envelopes that were in the box. The first was from a friend; it contained nothing that interested her. The second was a letter from his brother. She glanced through it and put it to one side. The third held her interest. The envelope was soiled and crumpled as though some one in a fit of anger had crushed it in his hand. The handwriting was angular and seemed to have been written by one who was not any too familiar with a pen. The ink that was used seemed to have been of a strange consistency. Some parts of the letters were in relief, some showed little lumps, just as though the ink had been prepared with the white of an egg.

She opened the envelope and brought to light a small piece of parchment, crumpled, yellow in spots, and bearing these words:

"Dead men's hearts are full of Rub——"

What was the meaning of these words?" she asked herself. Why was the parchment preserved and not thrown away? Why were the last three letters crossed out? She was baffled and mystified. She always loved poetry, prided herself on her imagination, but she was at a loss to discover anything poetic about that line. It was nothing but sheer nonsense.

A sudden thought flashed across her mind. She counted the number of letters with the three crossed out; there were twenty-six—the number of letters in the alphabet. Was it the key to the code? She picked up one of the notes. She noticed that "M" occurred more frequently than any other letter and figured that it represented "E."

There was a rap on the door. The rapping was kept up without a break. Her heart beat fast. As quickly as she could she stuffed the papers into the black tin box, put the box back into the desk and, breathing heavily, went to the door.

"Miss Ruggiero," exclaimed a thin, sallow-faced woman dressed in a faded wrapper, "I want to talk to you. Let me in."

The wild-eyed woman, panting and wringing her hands, sat down on the bed. She seemed too excited to speak.

"What is the matter, Teresa?" asked Francesca.

"Oh—oh—that awful smell," she stammered in Italian.

"What odor?"

"The smell that always set your uncle raging like a madman. Oh, it's terrible, so terrible!"

"Francesca recalled what Pastore had said about the fatal odor. She grew pale at the thought that perhaps the criminals were now trailing her.

"Tell me all that you know, Teresa."

Teresa brushed back a strand of hair.

"I was walking along the sidewalk when a man——"

"What kind of a man?" interrupted Francesca.

"Oh, a wicked-looking man—tall, thin, with black eyes that were like the eyes of a devil—and on his hand were three long white scars."

"What did he want?" interrupted Francesca again on a rack of impatience. "Tell me quickly, what did he want?"

"He wanted a black box."

"Of my uncle's?"

"And he wants me to send it to this address." She took a piece of crumpled paper from a pocket in her wrapper, and holding it gingerly between her thumb and forefinger, handed it to Francesca, with the warning, 'Don't smell; it has the fatal odor; don't smell.'"

Francesca read it:

"A. Z. P. O. Box 889 Utica, N. Y."

"He says that if the box doesn't leave this house by midnight—he has the house watched by confederates—he'll send you to where your uncle went. Oh—oh! How terrible."

Francesca looked at her for a moment, as though in a daze. Suddenly she burst into laughter.

"Teresa, there is nothing in the box. I just looked through it. I will pack it up and send it off directly."

"Oh, how glad I am that you are doing

so," exclaimed Teresa, and swinging her arm around Francesca, she kissed her rapturously. "I know that bad man. If you do not do as he says you will surely die."

Francesca smiled. She brought the box, wrapped it up in paper, and wrote on it the address of the stranger. She then handed it to Teresa, with the request that she immediately take it to the nearest post-office.

As soon as Teresa was out of the room she changed her dress and packed a small grip. Fifteen minutes later she was on her way to the Grand Central Depot, and within an hour she was sitting in a Pullman chair, peering into the ebbing waters of the Harlem River as the train she was in thundered over the bridge that spanned it.

Shortly after the train had passed through Yonkers. While she was looking at an excursion boat crowded with waving people steaming down the river she became conscious of a soft sweet odor. She looked about and saw a tall, thin man pass down the aisle. Francesca smiled at the idea of a man using perfume, and again turned her eyes toward the silvery Hudson that seemed to exercise a certain fascination. She again became conscious of that odor, which she had smelled a minute before. The man had returned and passed her to take a chair on the other side of the car. As he sat down she noticed that he had a kid glove on his right hand. When she thought of how warm it was she could not help but think the man was some country jay, who was trying to put on airs.

The train passed a line of grim, gray walls, and she heard some one behind her say "Sing Sing." The words smote her like a blow. She thought of Pastore and the horrible little cage people called the "death chamber." The girl did not know what it was, but she was sure it was something horrible—a den, dark and cheerless as that of a wild beast, a room with walls all slimy, covered with mold and dripping with water. And the electric chair! She shuddered as she pictured Pastore in the awful contrivance that the State used to execute murderers.

To divert her mind she tried to read a newspaper. Her eyes fell on the story of a girl who had moved among friends for several years, masqueraded as a boy, without being detected. She lapsed into thought. Could she do the same? She pictured herself in trousers and smiled.

The train came to a stop. There was no station in sight, and the passengers began to exchange inquiring glances. A trainman hurried into the car.

"What's the matter?" some one asked.

"Hot-box," answered the brakeman, moving quickly up the aisle. "There's no danger, though. Just keep your seats. We'll be on our way pretty soon again."

Fifteen minutes passed. Francesca began to feel uncomfortable. It was dark outside; the only objects of interest that met her eyes as they wandered across the river were the lights on the opposite shore. She began to feel tired. Closing her eyes, she soon fell asleep.

Presently she felt a hand on her shoulder and started. Blinking confusedly she stared about. A broad-faced porter dressed in white stood before her.

"Utica next stop, miss," he said, taking her grip.

She saw the man who had aroused her curiosity by his use of perfumery get up and go to the door. Evidently he was getting out at Utica as well as she. The girl noticed that he had removed the glove from his right hand, and as he put on his hat she saw the back of that hand. She uttered a sharp exclamation that made the passengers near by look at her.

On the back of the hand she recognized three long scars. The girl turned cold and hot alternately. There before her, without a question, was the man who was the cause of Fabrini's troubles and now the cause of Joe Pastore's expected execution, for Joe had told her about that marked hand.

She made up her mind to follow him. He alighted from the train and entered the waiting-room, where he met a large, thick-set man, to whom he gave his grips.

"Take these, Blake. I just feel like walking."

Francesca checked her bag, keeping an eye on the man all the while. When he left the station she followed close behind him.

He turned up a dark street, and she trembled with fear. She had not gone far when she heard footsteps and muffled voices. Suddenly she felt she was playing the part of a fool and felt an impulse to run back tc the station. Francesca was about to do so when she was violently seized from behind. A gag was thrust into her mouth and a bandage was tied around her eyes.

"Into the car wid her, Kelly," said a thick voice, and the next moment she felt herself raised and hurled like a sack of rags into the back seat of an automobile.

After riding for what seemed to be an age she felt the car come to a sudden stop. Some one picked her up and carried her up a long gravel path that crunched beneath the feet of the walkers. She felt herself being carried up a flight of stairs, through a long corridor, and then up another flight of stairs.

The man who carried her paused, and she heard the click of a key turning in a lock. The next minute she was thrown on the floor. As her hands were free she plucked the gag from her mouth and tore the bandage from her eyes.

Then she found herself in a large, brilliantly lighted room. The cream-colored walls were hung with pictures of wild animals. The tall windows, draped with exquisite French curtains, were barred. Why was there no furniture? she asked herself. There were no chairs and no tables. There was a cream-colored carpet on the floor; it was stained by wide splotches that looked as if someone had carelessly spilled tar on it.

"Where am I?" she asked, peering at the thick-set man that had been addressed as Blake. He blinked his small wide-set eyes and rubbed his cauliflower ears.

"Yuh want to know where you are? Why, you're the guest of Luigi's grandmother," he said, opening the door.

"And who is she?" demanded Francesca.

"You'll find out when the clock strikes twelve." This remark struck him as being extremely funny. He began laughing, and laughed so loudly that she heard him for a long while after he had left the room and had closed the door behind him.

After he had gone she rose to her feet and walked about. Francesca looked out of the windows, but it was too dark for her to see a thing. What was below she could not imagine. Not knowing what else to do, she sat down on the floor and took out a piece of paper from her bosom. She pored over it a long while, and finally deciphered the following:

"Illington is out to do us four guys dirt. Look out for him. He wants the big box all for himself. He's using Steinhardt's drug. If he comes around disguised look for the scars on his hand."

She tore the paper into tiny fragments and threw it out of the little window which led to the airshaft. She took out another paper and deciphered the words to read:

"Your wife has become the guest of Luigi's grandmother. Hereafter you will be more careful about secrets. If you tell anything about your wife's death to the police expect to perish within twenty-four hours."

She tore this up as she did the first, and read the third note that she had taken from the box.

"Why will you persist in asking for your share of the money? Might makes right, Fabrini. When I can do you as easily as I would kill a fly, why should I bother about giving you any of the gold in the big black box?"

As she tore this up into tiny fragments she fell into deep thought. These notes did not clear up anything; they merely wove a tighter fabric of mystery about the disappearance of her aunt and the death of her uncle.

She heard the click of a key in the lock. The door opened, and a slender man in evening clothes sauntered in. She recognized him as the man she had seen on the train, and cast a quick glance at his right hand. Yes, there were the three scars.

"Well, Miss Ruggiero, how do you feel?" he asked mockingly.

Sitting on the carpet with her hands clasped about her knees, she stared at him, as calm as though she was sitting at her typewriter desk down at the office while the boss was away to a ball game. She was absolutely resigned to anything that may happen to her.

"I suppose you realize that you are going to meet Luigi's grandmother?"

She looked at him cynically and twisted her pretty mouth into a smile.

"The only people that I have met who use perfumery are women," she said; "from that I infer that you are Luigi's grandmother."

"You fell into my trap beautifully, my little lassie, didn't you."

"And what are you going to gain by all your troubles?"

He scowled and lit a cigarette. "Do you realize that within two hours you are going to be torn to pieces by a wild beast?"

She scrutinized him from head to foot.

"So you are going to tear me to pieces? I suppose you are the beast, aren't you?"

"Do you see those black splotches on the carpet?"

She nodded.

"Every splotch marks the ending of a person who has been torn to pieces by a huge Bengal tiger. That splotch at your feet was left by the wife of Giovanni Fabrini."

"How interesting," said the girl. "And will you stand near when your big Bengal tiger chews me up?"

He nodded.

"How nice! But wouldn't it be nicer if I tamed the big brute and made him devour you instead of me?"

"Do you smell that?" he said, throwing a fine powder in her direction.

She sniffed and recognized the odor that she had become conscious of when he passed her in the train. Recalling what Pastore told her, she blew out her breath to clear the air in front of her.

"That powder is the distillation of a plant that five men—your uncle was one and I another—found while hunting wild animals in the jungles of Africa. In its effect on the feline species it resembles catnip. It not only attracts the beasts, but renders them so submissive that the hungriest of them will become like a kitten, permitting you to pat them without any protest. A friend of mine, a chemist named Steinhart, perfected it so that it has the same effect on human beings."

"Because you are an inhuman monster it does not affect you, does it?" asked the girl naively.

"Look here, miss; five people met their deaths in this room. Let me warn you this is no time for jesting. I'll——"

He stopped short. The lights had gone out. Both were in the darkness. There never was a darkness more impenetrable than the gloom that suffused the room, a minute ago dazzlingly bright. The man swore with rage.

Francesca thought quickly. Stealthily she rose to her feet. The man lit a match. Before it could flash up she leaped upon him. So unexpected was this assault that he staggered and fell beneath her light weight. With a quick movement he threw her off. As he did so something heavy fell on the floor close to Francesca's feet. She stooped and picked it up. It was an automatic.

The man lit another match. He saw the girl smiling calmly behind his own gun. He dropped the match and staggered backward, as though crouching for a spring. She anticipated his intentions and jumped to one side, but not a minute too soon. She felt his arm brush violently against her shoulder.

She found herself near the wall. Groping along it, she felt the door. With a quick movement she flung the door open. In doing so, however, she put herself at a serious disadvantage. The man was almost upon her. In the light that came from the hallway he could plainly see her. She hated to use the gun, but now she had to. She closed her eyes, like a woman, and pulled the trigger five times. When she opened her eyes again she saw her antagonist in a heap.

The girl heard heavy footsteps coming up the stairs. She looked over the balustrade and saw three men approaching; then she

sprang behind the open door. The three men were quite close. Uttering a short prayer, she threw the revolver at the electric light overhead. It struck its mark. Just as the light went out she leaped over the balustrade, landed on the fifth step from the top and rolled on down like a bundle of rags. Her head struck a newel-post, and everything became black.

When she came to she found herself in a small shabby room done in cheap wall paper. She was lying on a bed that smelled of moldy straw. She raised herself to a sitting position and wondered how she got there. Hearing light footsteps, she looked around quickly.

A slender woman entered. Francesca stared and turned deathly pale. The woman paused and smiled.

"Who are you?" demanded Francesca.

"Don't you recognize me?"

"You—you—are my Aunt Agnes," she stammered.

The slender woman threw her arms around her and smothered her with kisses.

"I am your Aunt Agnes. I saved your life."

"But—how did you manage it?"

"Listen," began the slender woman; "Blake, Black Illington's friend, is a friend of mine. He told me that you were in the house."

"But Illington told me that you were dead."

"Good as dead," she said, shaking her head sadly; "for five years I was kept a prisoner. And think of what I suffered. Every evening I had some one come to my little room with its barred windows to tell me that on the following day I would be devoured by Luigi's grandmother, a voracious Bengal tiger."

Francesca stared at her horrified. After a while she asked: "Was it you that switched off the lights?"

"No, I had Blake do it for me. He hated Illington as much as I did, but he was mortally afraid of him."

"Tell me, Aunt Agnes, why did Illington kill Uncle Joe?"

The aunt wiped away the tears from her eyes.

"You see, it was this way. Your uncle, Illington and three other men while hunting wild animals for circuses and zoological parks came upon a huge black box filled with precious jewels. I understand that the five men made an agreement that they would share the wealth equally. Illington had a clever scheme, and had the box shipped to the States in a schooner. To avoid the customs he and his four companions overcame the captain and the crew, took possession of the ship, and ran into a reef off the coast of Maine. What became of the crew and its captain I don't know, but I do know that the black box was safely landed and safely hidden in a bank of sand. Unknown to the other four, Illington appropriated the treasure and kept if for himself. To establish his title he killed the other four."

"But why did he hold you as a prisoner?"

"Oh, he wanted to punish me for throwing him down to marry your uncle."

The doorway was darkened by a broad-shouldered man. It was Blake. He played with the cap nervously and blinked his small wide-set eyes.

"The bulls arrested Inky Brown and Mike Lewis," he said. After a pause he added: "Mike Lewis confessed that he saw Black Illington kill your husband. Inky said he was with him, too."

"Oh," exclaimed Francesca, "that will save Joe from the electric chair."

She became suddenly pale as a spectre.

"But, auntie," she gasped, "I will have to go to that chair. I am a murderess. I killed Illington."

The aunt wrapped her arms around her waist and kissed her.

"No, my dear, you are not a murderer, but a benefactor. You killed a monster. You shot Illington in self-defense."

Joe Pastore was set free. When Mrs. Fabrini told him the whole story he asked:

"And what became of the voracious Bengal tiger—Luigi's grandmother?"

"There never was a Luigi's grandmother. It was all a myth, invented by Illington."

So the lovers were united after all.

A Night on Patrol

By H. MILLS

"PATROLMAN POLLACK talking, Post 42."

The door of the signal-box was slammed shut.

"A quiet night so far, but the night is young, as it's only 8:30," said the cop as he faced me.

We walked back to Delancey street, that thoroughfare on the lower East Side that is thronged with pedestrians twenty-four hours a day. Four blocks of this street was the officer's beat. On Orchard street the signal flash-box was on another patrolman's post, but the officer who patrolled Delancey street, which passes Orchard, uses the same call-box.

One of the most important things the patrolman on post does, especially in a section that is crowded with pedestrians and vehicles a good portion of the day, is to keep things moving, and at almost every corner we reached a taxi driver had to be told that the street corner was no parking space.

The ordinance allows no parking privileges to taxicabs on street corners until ten o'clock at night. After this hour the cars can park against the crossing curb, and the taxi drivers can solicit trade from the passing people. Despite the fact that all chauffeurs are fully acquainted with the traffic laws and regulations, the patrolman on nearing the corners of his beat has to chase the taxis that stand on the corner during the early hours of the evening.

If the cop was not on the job the street crossings would soon become crowded with parked taxis, and traffic in the crowded street would be impossible. After ten o'clock at night the stream of vehicles and pedestrians start to thin a shade, and it is permissible to allow the taxis to pull up at the corner. It cannot be realized what a service is rendered to the citizens of a crowded section by keeping the taxis on the move, for, besides making traffic difficult, they would hamper the progress of fire apparatus in reaching the scene of conflagration, which in a tenement district spells disaster.

We reached the end of the post, crossed to the other side of the street, and slowly walked in the same direction we had come from. We patrolled the entire post, but nothing occurred outside the usual routine work of the patrolman. Orchard street again was reached, and the officer made his hourly call to the station house from the signal flash-box.

We returned to Delancy street and proceeded to make the rounds again. Outside of the usual chasing of the taxi drivers from the street corners, the patroling was becoming monotonous. It couldn't be possible that a tour of duty on this East Side beat would be without an exciting incident before it came to an end.

A sergeant's police department auto drove abreast of us and pulled up at the curb. We went to meet it, and the patrolman saluted in true military style.

"Pollack, come with me and look up these two complaints."

The sergeant armed with warrants, the patrolman and myself following, made our way to Allen street and stopped before a Greek coffee house. The individuals inside looked at us in surprise as the thought of a raid flashed through their minds. We entered and searched the premises for liquor, but the search was of no avail, as nothing unlawful was found.

Directly across the street was another coffee house, entirely devoid of patrons.

This establishment we also entered, and here, too, our search revealed no intoxicating liquors. Then we made our way slowly back to Delancey street, and the sergeant prepared to enter his auto growling:

"Those fellows you saw playing dominoes, hang them, they were gambling. But what can you do? They either keep a chart or make mental records. Every one of these coffee houses and all-night restaurants have games going full blast. Nothing can be done, for no evidence can be obtained that would warrant a regular raid to be made."

In this precinct the Clinton street station territory has within its boundaries the haunts of every conceivable criminal—from the lowest and meanest church poor-box thief to the master leader of a yegg and murder gang. In this section you can find any criminal in the way of a foreigner. A little to the south the Italian and other Southern European groups predominate.

The sergeant seated himself in the patrol auto, and with a waved good-night instructed the policeman chauffeur to drive on. It was now after ten. The beat was patrolled again, and the hourly station call was made. Time dragged slowly on. The patrolman and myself were standing a block below Orchard street when a kid ran up to us shouting:

"Hey, cop, de post is flashing green."

We took the block on a dog trot, and as we turned into Orchard street we could see the steady green flash from the signal pole.

"It's a station call, all right."

The officer flung open the door at the call-box and put the receiver to his ear.

"Post 42 answering."

A pencil came out of the patrolman's coat pocket and he began writing the message the desk sergeant was giving him on the alarm pad.

"Proceed to Broome and Norfolk streets. Wait arrival of sergeant from station. A crap game to be cleaned up."

The writing of the message on the pad provides any other officers in the vicinity with the news of the alarm flash should they respond to the silent call of the green light. It also saves times by preventing them from asking the desk officer for instructions.

We left immediately for Norfolk and Broome streets. Halfway to our destination we started to run. A few kids followed us, as they surmised something was going to happen on account of seeing a cop and a fellow in civies hurrying along. A sudden stop and a waving of the patrolman's night-stick soon put an end to the increasing crowd of following youngsters. Arriving at Norfolk street, another patrolman cautioned us to secrete outselves in a nearby doorway, which we did. A few seconds passed and a sergeant arrived at the corner. The two patrolmen and myself joined him.

"It is a cellar in the middle of the block I want to clean out. I got enough men now. The desk sergeant flashed nine posts, so the men will all be here in a few minutes. Come on and we'll blow the works now."

We swung around the corner into Broome street, and in the middle of the block stopped before a cellar opening. Two more patrolmen came running down the street and joined us. The sergeant went down the stairs and gave a door, which was of fragile build, a push and flung it open.

Before us about fourteen men were grouped. Some on their hands and knees, others bending over the shoulders of the crap players, assembled in a circle.

The sergeant dove for one of them in the entrance, and with a swing of his night-stick retarded his progress and then sent the crap shooters sprawling.

"At them, boys! Watch the door!" he shouted.

Three more patrolmen came down the stairs, and the gang was soon surrounded. A pair of dice and a few dollars in money was confiscated. Another policeman opened the door and reported to the sergeant. The youths caught in the raid were lined up in single file with their hands up, and were given a frisking to find any dangerous weapons or other implements on their person.

The sergeant surveyed the situation and went to the door, opened it and looked out in the street. A policeman was holding back a crowd that surged forward on all

sides on the sidewalk, preventing a few vehicles from making their way through the thoroughfare.

"Guess we can handle these guys, eh? Each take two, then we won't need to call the wagon," said the sergeant.

The walk to the station, which was about seven blocks away, was interesting, as word soon spread in the district that a raid had been made, and residents and ward loungers sallied from their haunts to see if any of their friends were caught. At the station, after the usual search, the prisoners were locked up awaiting the trip to night court.

We went back to the 42 post, and after another patrol of the beat we noticed many of the stores closing their doors. The patrolman looked at his watch, and discovered it was three minutes to midnight.

"Come on, let's hike to Allen street and meet the relief," said he.

The hour was between midnight and the new day when I left the officer at Allen street. After a long stroll through the East Side it was a comfort to sit in a cozy corner in a restaurant and devour a frugal repast. The place was one of those many all-night eating houses that dot the area in Chinatown and its adjacent environs.

And there I was to hear a story of the way victims of spite are sometimes framed up by powerful enemies who do not hesitate to swear a man's liberty away in order to gain a petty revenge.

The table opposite was vacant, but not very long. Two men entered, and after ordering certain dishes they began talking, and I was an interested listener. One of them was a detective, a lieutenant on the inspector's staff. From appearances one would surmise that the other man was a person who had bucked the workings of a hard fate during his life. But he was the owner of the cheap restaurant.

The detective removed a cigarette from a silver case, offered one to his companion, who declined to smoke, then lit his, and inhaled slowly. Conversation soon started, and the stillness of the place made the tones plain within a radius of a few feet. The detective was listening attentively to what his companion was saying.

"I own this place and I want to run it on the square," he told the sleuth. "It would be unwise for me to conduct my business otherwise. I will tolerate no underhand methods, and the police will always be welcomed to give the place the once over. There is one thing, thank God, a fellow can be glad of, and that is that the police in this metropolis are 'white men,' anyhow."

"Why," asked the detective, smiling, "have you ever bucked the police?"

"Buck the cops? Say, any one who does it is either inviting trouble or is crazy. Once the police set their mind to put a crook out of business he's either going out or going to jail. That's the reason it pays never to buck them, and that's going to be my policy. A square deal to all, no ward politics, no making of political enemies again, and I guess one can play safe."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I once got in a peck of trouble out West in the town I came from. It's a tough story, lieutenant."

"Let's hear what happened to you."

The restaurant owner nodded, and said:

"All right! Here's the yarn. On the Coast I had a restaurant business in fine shape, bringing in big profits. My chow-house was a block away from the slums, and a rough patronage was established that filled the tables twenty-four hours of the day. Everything was going smooth, when one night a ward politician entered the house and instructed a waiter to summon me. I greeted the fellow with a friendly hand, but he ignored it.

"'Listen here, newcomer,' said he, 'things have been going good in your joint, and nobody ever bothered you, but I am just saying that the party in charge of this district has a candidate for alderman, and any contributions to the campaign fund will be rewarded. If not we'll sic the police onto you.'

"A sudden spirit of aggressiveness and hostility seized me, and losing control of my temper for once, I sailed into the guy. I told him what I thought of the candidate, and threatened to throw him out. He de-

parted, and I followed him to the front door.

"'Remember what you did to-night, and don't yell when you get a shaking-up,' he said with a grin as he went out.

"These words troubled me for the rest of the evening, but with other cares pressing, I soon forgot them. A few weeks passed and election day came. By inquiry I found that the alderman who carried the district my chow-house was in was a personal friend of the boss of the Tenderloin. It was a month or so after election, when one day I foolishly related the visit of the blackmailer to one of my patrons, whom I did not know at the time was an active political rival of the alderman.

"One day shortly afterwards the front door flew open and a man instructed my helpers to summon me. I was roughly greeted, and a newspaper was shoved under my nose.

"'You think you are blamed smart, don't you? Refuse to make a friendly political contribution; then, not satisfied, you write to the press what you should keep confidential. Blast you! I'll get you out of this district for this. Watch out, and if you are wise pack up and get.'

"He left, banging the door, and I looked at the newspaper he left in my hands. It would be useless to offer explanations. It was apparent that the blackmailer had passed the word along to his friends on the press staff, and the write-up was so worded that it appeared that I had complained to the police of the conditions that existed in the Tenderloin and about the extortion methods of the politicians.

"I decided to play the game of 'watchful waiting.' I regretted my action and thoughtlessness, and decided that I would know better in the future. Two weeks went by, when one night I was returning to my place, and as I neared it I noticed a police patrol backed to the curb and a crowd encircling a squad of policemen who evidently were raiding the premises. I pushed my way through and came to my door front. Inside the regular patrons were lined up against the wall, and in the line-up were several tough characters whom I had never seen before. I was startled. At the back of the room three women were standing under guard of two sleuths. The inspector stepped forward and handed me a summons to appear in court on a charge of disorderly conduct and running a haven for fugitives from the law. The charge had been made by the blackmailer. I couldn't speak for the minute, and when finally I could I yelled at the inspector that it was a frame-up.

"'Frame-up? Man, you are talking foolish. You know well enough that these characters have been frequenting this place since it started.'

"'It's a lie!' I shouted. 'They are all strangers to me.'

"He called to one of his men to bring one of the women over. It was done.

"The inspector questioned her, and to my amazement she stated that employees of mine had allowed all sorts of crooks to hang out in my place. The inspector questioned the other two women, and their statements tallied with the first. One of the men lined up whom I never saw before told the inspector that I had told him it was O.K. to gamble in the back room and to bring in as many followers as could be possibly accommodated without arousing the suspicion of the police.

"I shut up. I knew the politician had a case framed against me and thought it would be best to fight it out in court with the aid of good legal talent. The hearing was brief and the case put off until a future date. My counsel advised me to go easy with my actions, for he feared I had made an enemy of the political powers in my section, and things would be made hot for me.

"A week and a half later, while I was attending some business in a suburban town, my chow-house was the scene of a desperate gang fight. One man was killed, and when the police arrived the place was topsy-turvey.

"I couldn't get the full details of how it started, for the only thing my assistant, whom I left in charge, could tell was that the trouble started without a minute's warning. Of course it was another frame-up

to blacken my character and I began to get worried.

"This second attack made it bad for me, especially at the time of my trial, and my business began declining. The trial came off, and the State's case was presented perfectly. I was lucky to pull out with a heavy fine. The affair was costly. Another one like it and I would be financially ruined.

"I tried to get things straight again, but somehow my business fell practically to nothing. Steady customers feared to come near the place for fear of being caught in a raid. It was getting on my nerve worse now, and I was becoming a physical wreck. Some time later I was strolling through Chinatown at a late hour one night.

"Reaching a deserted street corner, I turned to go south, when two men came out of the darkness and brushed against me. I prepared to resist a hold-up, when one of the men pushed me, and in a minute the two had me on the sidewalk. Suddenly both let go of me and disappeared. I thought the thing strange and hoped a cop would come, but not one was in sight. Then I started off again, brushing myself as I walked.

"I reached the next corner, when two men, dressed conservatively and neatly, approached.

" 'Up with those hands!' one of them exclaimed. I was surprised at the command, but put them up when a revolver was pressed to my breast. A pair of handcuffs were put on my wrists, and I was then calmly informed that I was arrested for carrying and smuggling drugs. Here was a third frame-up, I thought bitterly.

"I never saw any drugs in my life, yet when they brought me to headquarters in my pockets were found three vials of heroin. My restaurant was searched, and a quantity of morphine and several small opium packs were confiscated. I was nearly crazy. Just after getting over one court case, business dropping, finances getting low, and now the thought nearly made me go mad. To think that an innocent man could be framed so thoroughly and made to suffer punishment for things he never did, for those drugs were of course planted in my place and on my person as evidence to convict me by hirelings of my relentless enemy.

"My counsel again came to my aid. Fine fellow he was, a young Italian, full of pep and fight, and the case fell down after a vigorous court battle. My attorney fought hard, and I was acquitted of the charge of smuggling drugs. I guess my appeal to the jury for a square deal and my story of how I was attacked by two unknown men before the detectives arrested me with the vials had some effect. I was free, but the fight cost my last dollar, and the chow-house was not even paying its overhead expenses.

"After a conference with my lawyer he asked what I was going to do, and when I told him I had better head for the East he grasped my hand, remarking:

" 'My dear man, if you don't, the next trip you make will be to San Quentin, for the next time they will get you so completely "framed" that a jury of dumbbells would vote for conviction.' So that's how I landed here, but I tell you, lieutenant, I could have saved my nest egg if I listened to one sentence of my enemy."

"What was that?"

"Watch out, and if you are wise pack up and get."

"An interesting yarn," said the detective dryly as he arose and drew a pair of nippers from his hip pocket, "but it was all a beautiful lie."

"What's that?" gasped the restaurant keeper, turning pale.

"Put on these bracelets, Bill. We've got you dead to rights for handling narcotics. That's why I've been shadowing you. I guess you aren't quite the persecuted saint you tried to make me believe."

And as the handcuffs were snapped on his wrists and the lieutenant led him out, I went home kicking myself for swallowing his pitiful yarn.

DALY, THE "DICK"

by George Arthur Gray & Roy A. Giles

CHAPTER ONE

EVENTS that are interrelated, happening simultaneously, and called coincidences, are now taboo in the drama and story, and yet they continue to happen in real life. This may be one of the reasons why truth is stranger than fiction.

For instance, a boy destined to become a railroad president might be born on the day engineers began to build the railroad over which he was some day to preside. Few seeds fall among stones. They usually find their way into ground made ready to receive them. Fate plays pranks, yet Providence is usually there to lead to the happy ending. The seed that falls among the rocks may go to feed a beautiful bird with a joyous voice. In the ultimate you will find there is no waste or loss in nature. As all mankind is interdependent, it is reasonable to deduce that all events are interrelated, having as an objective some distant perfecting of God's or Nature's grand plan.

Be this as it may, it so happened that several events, disconnected, yet interrelated, are happening on a certain Thursday afternoon.

Carlyle B. Stapleton, one of our newest millionaires, was preparing to leave his sumptuously furnished offices.

At the same time Count Sigurd Dahlstrom, a Danish millionaire, newly arrived in America, was alighting from the Svenska-Amerikana liner *Otto the Third*. We see him, for the purpose of this narrative, surrounded by a persistent crowd of newspaper reporters and camaramen. Is the count retiring and modest? Does the count try to evade the gentlemen of the press? Most emphatically he does *not*. He appears to be enjoying the experience immensely, and is telling the news-hungry horde of his great wealth and priceless jewels.

Would the count like to "jimmy" his way into American high society? The truth is he would.

The count is what Detective Jack Daly, crack thief catcher of the Central office, calls "a handsome Swede," which description will suffice.

In the crowd of reporters who are bombarding the count with questions is Tom Barton, a hustling reporter on the *Tribune*. Tom is a good judge of news values and of human nature.

We see Tom leaning toward his photographer as he whispers:

"In my opinion, this count person is one great big fourflusher."

"Well, he's got all the money necessary," replies the lean photographer, "and that is what buys and sells photographs."

"Righto," agrees Tom, "but I'll bet a punctured penny with a lame Indian on it that before I get through with this count baby I will get a whole lot bigger story than I am getting to-day. If he pulls any rough stuff on any American girls, I'm going to sic my friend Jack Daly on him. It's my little idea that this little Swede isn't no count, and maybe he isn't even a Swede. He is just a plain liar, and whatever he says, I believe just the opposite."

"Shoot the works," said the lean photographer, which meant that he was indifferent in the matter.

Just why Tom called the count "little" and "baby" must be explained by a slang interpreter, for the count really was six feet tall.

Tom had the count on his notebook, so he thrust him out of his thoughts as a thing disagreeable and began to think of some one else. This some one was Dorothy Travers, an heiress from the West, who happened to be visiting her aunt, Mrs. Hilton Taylor, a widow with enough money to support one car and two servants. Both this matron and maid were prominent and popular in society, a fact which did not bother Dorothy Travers very much, for the truth is she was satiated with both money and society, and she was dreaming her dreams of an American boy with a good record, a well-set-up body, a deep sense of humor and a light heart.

Coincidence again enters the arena at this juncture "to slap destiny in the slats," as the breezy Tom might say, for at this same hour events were shaping themselves in the immediate vicinity of the dainty Dorothy herself.

In the one Taylor family auto Dorothy, who owned several cars of her own in the West, was seated with her aunt and Roddy B. Stapleton, good-for-nothing son of the good-for-less millionaire, who, as has been said, was just leaving his office.

"The day is so fair," Roddy was saying as he fawned on Dorothy, "that it serves to bring out new beauties in nature," and he looked at Dorothy in a manner to prove to her that he meant her, and not old Dame Nature at all.

"Oh, gosh," said Dorothy, and her aunt sneezed. Then Dorothy added in a bored tone:

"Ain't nature grand?"

Dorothy knew that any enlightening conversation would be lost on Roddy, so she was not wasting any. She was trying to talk down to his level until she could succeed in dropping him off somewhere—preferably the Woolworth Tower.

He finally unloaded in front of the Place Del Norte Hotel, where, with a profuse good-by, he was gone. Both women in the car were relieved. Tom and the other reporters who had followed the loquacious Count Dahlstrom to his quarters in the Place Del Norte were just walking down the corridor, and Tom was just emerging, as the Taylor car started away. He caught sight of Dorothy in the tonneau. His face lighted, and with a burst of speed he made the running board of the car, and with a hearty "Well, well," he was soon beside Dorothy. The car had stopped at Dorothy's orders. Dorothy extended her hand in hearty greeting, and the two were soon chatting gayly. Tom, it seems, with his $60 per, had long ago succeeded in interesting Dorothy in a way that Roddy and his millions had failed to do.

"We'll take you down to your office," Dorothy was saying, "as long as you *must* get back. Always my disappointment; you writers are always busy."

"My disappointment and my sorrow both in this case," insisted Tom as he clung to Dorothy's hand as though he intended to keep it. And so they chatted, and the office was reached all too soon.

Tom bade Dorothy good-by at the portals of the old *Tribune* building, where Horace Greeley's famous hand helped to guide a nation.

As Tom took his leave Dorothy gave him a lingering smile, born of deep interest, which Dorothy now realized was swiftly ripening into love.

CHAPTER TWO

THE Ryan Employment Bureau was located on Madison avenue, near 57th street, in what once was a mansion. Its manager was Sylvester Ryan, known to the police as "Smooch" Ryan and at one time a guest at a large place up the river known as Sing Sing Prison.

A forlorn-appearing girl sat on one of the unattractive and uncomfortable benches placed for waiting applicants for positions in the wealthy households represented by "Smooch," for he represented nothing but wealthy households. He took great care in choosing clients. There was a reason for this.

"I am so anxious to obtain work," said the forlorn girl, advancing as Smooch entered.

"Who did you work for last?" asked Smooch formally and betraying little interest.

"For Mrs. Groves," said the girl, "and I loved her, but they had to let us all go when the firm in Wall Street that handled Mrs. Groves's interests failed. The papers said the Wall Street place was little more than a bucket shop. It was cruel. The Groves were such lovely people. They will give me a good character. You can phone them."

"Humph," said Smooch, for, had the girl only known it, he was not looking for people of good character, but he did betray interest in the bucket shop and made the girl tell him all she knew about it.

"How much did the Groves drop—I mean lose?" he interrogated.

"Three hundred thousand dollars, I understand," said the girl.

"Some haul," said Smooch inaudibly to himself, and then audibly:

"Here's an address. People there hire just one girl. They are your kind of people," which meant that their resources were too little to arouse the avariciousness of Smooch. "If the people you are working for ever make big money—ever get good and rich, you understand—come back and tell me, and I'll have them raise your wages." But Smooch wanted such information for any but eleemosynary purposes.

"You are very kind," observed the girl, with the shade of a tear in her eyes.

"Yes," admitted Smooch, "you get that way in this business." And the peculiar part of it is that he really believed that he *was* kind. He sat quite a few minutes telling himself what a good fellow he was, and then a polished, efficient-appearing person, who really had been a fellow boarder of Smooch's at Sing Sing, entered. He was the kind of man who would scuttle a ship, beat his grandmother, or rob a baby's bank for a dime, but he did not look it. Nature had played another prank and had made this human gorilla look like a minister of the gospel.

Smooch had once been caught by a dictaphone, so now, when he had anything confidential to say, he wrote it. He handed the newcomer a cigarette paper, on which he had written:

"Job is O.K. The boss wants the silverware. Chicago Kate is the maid. She has the layout and the frame-up. Work fast."

The crook finished reading, chewed up the paper, and spat it out the window. And so this crook that evening became the new butler, taking up his duties at the home of Mrs. Hilton Taylor.

Mrs. Taylor herself, although dressed for the opera, instructed the lamb-like crook in his duties. As she was thus engaged Dorothy came down the stairs, entered the drawing-room where the two were talking, and went direct to her aunt, who dismissed the butler.

The maid was just entering, carrying a beautiful and expensive fur coat to Dorothy. She and the butler passed so close they almost brushed elbows. A look of perfect understanding passed between them. The maid assisted Dorothy into the massive white fur opera coat, and arm in arm the two women departed to hear "Fra Diavolo."

And these events, so simple themselves, started much activity at police headquarters.

Tom Barton, the reporter, and his detective friend Jack Daly had been playing

checkers, which means they were marking time.

Tom yawned, Jack dumped the checkers, and Tom said, "Let's go grab a cuppa coffee," when the sergeant's phone rang. There were a few almost excited words, the buzzer in the detectives' room zizzed, and Tom and Jack jumped forward. With a bound they reached the sergeant's desk, and in a few minutes they were on their way rapidly and together. Jack Daly was on the kind of a case he liked, and Tom Barton had the makings of a good newspaper story in view.

CHAPTER THREE

DOROTHY and her aunt returned early from the opera because Mrs. Taylor had a headache. They entered and started to go to their chambers without flashing the bulbs in the hall, which were dim-lighted. Dorothy heard a strange noise just off the big dining-room, where was located the closet containing the family silverware, worth a small fortune, because it had been passed along in the Taylor family for centuries.

Neither the woman nor the girl could be accounted as nervous ordinarily. They exchanged puzzled glances, hardly distinguishable in the dimly lighted reception hall. Dorothy began to advance toward the china closet, while Mrs. Taylor, interpreting Dorothy's ideas one might say telepathically, stood by a phone masked by a doll in the corner of the back parlor, just off the dining-room.

As Dorothy noiselessly advanced the sounds from the silver vault became clearer. It was unmistakably the dull clanking of silverware being thrown together and hurriedly packed.

Dorothy sprang forward like a lioness and banged the door almost shut. As it closed weight was thrown against it from the inside. It bulged, almost throwing Dorothy from her feet, but she fought with her weight against the door almost superhumanly. The door then slammed shut. Dorothy, her strength spent in the short, sharp struggle, fell to the floor, and the next second her aunt, who a few minutes before had been pampering a headache, now hysterically was phoning police headquarters.

Dorothy recovered shortly, advancing to where her aunt stood.

"Well, that was quick work," she said, "if I do congratulate us," and she was actually laughing. Her aunt smiled feebly, too.

"Yes," said Mrs. Taylor, "and if the police will just hurry——" New noises from the silverware vault cut short the words. Then two women rushed to the vault door to see the sharpened end of a "jimmy," that short crowbar used by burglars, thrust through between the door and the jamb. A strong man was applying energy and the lock was beginning to buckle.

"They are escaping," shrieked Mrs. Taylor frantically, and Dorothy this time rushed to the phone.

"We have some one—a thief locked in the closet," she panted when she had been switched onto detective headquarters. "This is Mrs. Hilton Taylor's. We phoned before. Come quickly. They are escaping."

"Our best men are on the way in a fast car," said a heavy, masculine voice. And then two things happened. The lock on the china vault gave way under heavy purchase and flew halfway across the room. The maid and the butler stumbled out of the closet. A police department automobile, bearing Detective Daly, Tom Barton, and a uniformed policeman, clattered up the walk and the officers alighted and hammered on the door. It was opened by Mrs. Taylor, who rushed forward.

"There they are. Get them!" shouted Dorothy.

There was a short, sharp struggle, during which the maid fought even more fiercely than her male companion. But soon both crooks were wearing bracelets of a kind they did not like.

"That cat bit me," growled Detective Daly, whose hand showed marks of the maid's teeth. "If you were a man I'd bust your jaw." This last to the unmaidenly maid.

Tom Barton was sure Dorothy had conducted herself with amazing self-possession and bravery. When the excitement was over, however, and she beheld Detective Daly putting the man and the maid in handcuffs, she proved herself thoroughly feminine by getting exceedingly nervous, now that she was about to recount the thrills of the last few moments to the detective and the newspaper man in whom she was so interested.

Noticing her condition, her aunt became altogether motherly, and with a "Well, my poor, brave darling," she began racing about, looking for her smelling salts. To tell the truth, Dorothy looked like a darling to Tom, with the excited light in her eyes, but as for appearing a *brave* darling, she did not. She was trembling nervously.

"Come, brace up," said Detective Daly authoritatively, and Tom, radiating his tender fondness for the girl, moved to her side.

"Tell us all about it," insisted Detective Daly, and between inhalations of the revivifying ammonia salts Dorothy recounted the story of their surprise and struggle with the crooks discovered in the act of robbing the silver vault.

With a lingering handshake and a light in his eyes, which was noted both by Dorothy's aunt and the detective, Tom prepared to leave with the detective and his prisoners. He knew there was more to the story than he was able to write for his paper that night.

"That was an interesting interview we had on the servant question," observed Daly, as he and Tom shoved their prisoners into the automobile and started for the hold-over.

"Sure was," agreed Tom.

"If I am any judge of distances," blurted Daly, his Irish wit asserting itself, "you and the Dorothy girl are getting pretty close together."

"She's just friendly," said Tom with a sigh, which was not lost on Daly.

"I said close," insisted Daly. "You could span the space with a paper clip, or I am no judge of distances, as I said before."

"You are the king of kidders," said Tom, which, while not elegant, is real newspaper English.

"Did you observe," said Daly, after a chuckle at Tom's expense, "that the ladies said these fine birds with the false feathers were furnished by the Sylvester Ryan Employment Bureau?"

"Sure I did," said Tom, which is also newspaper English.

"If I am not mistaken, this Ryan is none other than 'Smooch' Ryan, and I am going calling on him in the morning. Want to go along?"

"Don't make it too early," said Tom. "Remember a newspaper reporter works mostly all night."

"I've seen you pile out early for worse stories," said Daly. "Make it 9:30."

"I'll be there," assured Tom.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOM and Detective Daly sauntered into Ryan's employment office at the hour agreed upon. Smooch was at his desk looking over his morning mail. The visitors walked to the rail where many weary job hunters had leaned for no purpose, and the ex-crook looked up. If he suspected Tom and Daly, he made no sign.

"It would be a great day to go shooting butterflies," grinned Daly, addressing Smooch. Just then the phone rang. Smooch was about to answer it, but Daly vaulted the rail, flashed his detective shield, and ordering Ryan to sit still and say nothing, Daly put the receiver to his own ear.

Throwing a listening-in attachment with two receivers to Tom, the detective motioned the reporter to hook it up, which Tom did with speed and precision. He was to listen, too. Daly then handed the regular receiver to Smooch, and taking one listening-in receiver, he motioned to Ryan to answer the phone. Ryan was about to refuse, but Daly edged his coat aside and let Ryan glimpse a very handy revolver and blackjack.

Smooch said "Oh" audibly and answered the phone. Ryan's face betrayed worriment of mind, mingled with disgust.

"Hello," spoke the receivers in chorus. "Is this you, Smooch?"

"Yes," pantomimed Daly to Ryan as he fingered a revolver with his free hand.

"Yes," said Smooch, acting on the forceful suggestion of Daly.

"They want four extra servants at Stapleton's to-night. What do you know about that?" said the voice on the wire.

"Great!" shouted Daly as he pushed Ryan from the phone and hung up the receiver.

"So they want four extra servants at Stapleton's, do they?" Daly taunted Ryan. "Well, the police department will furnish them. You come along with us before I bust your dome in. We've got a nice little job for you up the river."

Detective Daly afterward got Stapleton's office on the wire and said:

"So you are needing four extra servants this evening, are you, Mr. Stapleton? I have been unable to get your home, so I called you up to assure you that we would furnish them. This is Sylvester Ryan talking, and you can rest contented that you will receive our best attention. Sorry I could not get your wife on the wire. Maybe if you try you will be more successful. Please don't hang up.—Oh, yes, yes, I must do that. I will—I assure you I will.—But, Mr. Stapleton, so I can be sure to furnish you the right people, would you mind telling me why you want four, and whether they are to be men or women?

"Oh, I see. Yes, yes, good, very good. I see, yes—a little week-end party. I agree with you. You have captured the prize guest of the season. I have heard of Count Dahlstrom—very wealthy and cultured man. I hope to supply his needs in the way of help should he settle here and leave the hotel life. It is a lonesome life, Mr. Stapleton, pardon my loquaciousness, but I know it pays to advertise, and I talk up my own business always, although I try not to be too familiar; forgive me if I seem so. *Please* forgive me. As for the hotels, I assure you, Mr. Stapleton, we furnish the very best of the hotel help, too. I thank you. Good-by, and count on us for everything."

"He finally hung up on me," observed Daly to Tom, who, as always, was at his side. "I nearly talked that bird bow-legged."

"When Edison invented the talking machine he should have named it Daly," said Tom solemnly.

"Chase yourself now," said Daly with a chuckle, for when Tom and Daly were not busy "collaring" some culprit they were mostly spoofing each other.

Daly led the way to a wardrobe room at detective headquarters, where they summoned two detective friends of Daly, and all four began trying on complete suits of servants' livery.

Daly, as usual, was first into the strange clothes. His revolver was a bugbear.

"How in the name of all the saints," he grinned, "is a man to hang a gat onto a tight-fitting layout like this?"

"Wear it around your neck on a rope of pearls," suggested Tom.

"I'll hang you with a rope, and it won't be pearls," said Daly.

"Carry it in your muff, then," said Tom.

"I'll muff you one alongside your ear," guffawed Daly. Then he found he could adjust the gun under one of the flapping front skirts of the coat, and he was happy.

The other men resented this finery, and showed it in their actions.

"Aw, chase yourself," said Daly to the tallest of them. "Sure they made a mistake when they called you a plain-clothes man. You look as fancy as a premier danseuse, or whatever it is they call them bally girls."

"You mean bally blooming girls," corrected Tom, and everybody laughed.

"Bally bloomer your ownself," said Daly when he could get his breath. "You look like a drum-major in a minstrel parade, and the likes of you are poking fun at an honest policeman."

Finally the parade lined up and observed itself in the long mirror. "We'll pass," concluded Daly.

"Not without tickets," said Tom.

"Aw, go on now," grinned Daly, full of fun again. "We're not going to the Polo Grounds, and thank Gawd we're not."

"You'd get pinched for trifling if you

ever hit the Polo Grounds in that rig," Tom said without mercy.

"Whenever I hit the Polo Grounds in this rig," agreed Daly, "you can go out and invite in the mourners. Sure Tyrus or Babe would be justified in knocking me for a flock of home runs."

CHAPTER FIVE

AT the magnificent Long Island estate of the Stapletons the lawn fête was on in full swing, and events were happening so fast that it was hard to keep track of them. The lawn was garishly decorated with multi-colored electric bulbs, strung like beads, from tree to tree, and a splashing electric fountain played in the centre of the area set apart for the festivities. Groups of gaily dressed persons were here and there, indulging in sprightly talk, while a jazz band tuned up in a vine-covered pagoda. In one of the groups were Mrs. Taylor, Dorothy, and Roddy Stapleton, the dude. Roddy was being his cutest in an effort to impress the pretty Dorothy, who, as usual, was bored at his presence. She felt that he would take the first opportunity to propose to her. She also divined that she would have some inward amusement, but she intended to treat him respectfully out of consideration for his feelings, if he had any, which she really seriously doubted. Her idea that he wanted her for a toy, to exhibit to his sporting friends, was a correct one.

Finally Roddy excused himself to the ladies as he saw his father and the count approaching. Roddy knew that his father was playing the count for a fish, but he did not suspect that the count was somewhat of a crook himself.

The count left the senior Stapleton and began to chat with Mrs. Taylor, devoting most of his wiles, however, to Dorothy. The Stapletons, father and son, watched this from some little distance, and soon the elder Stapleton slapped his fat thigh with an utter lack of his wonted dignity and said:

"Oh boy, oh boy, that count does not seem to be any too popular with Miss Dorothy Travers, son. I see she has just left him flat on the lot."

That girl is mine," said the wealthy son, dropping into the vernacular as soon as he saw no one was near. "Why, dad, I've got her rumbling like a bunch of simps at a phony real estate auction. I'm satisfied that all she's got will be ours in a month or two. She'll be mine, and then I'll bring her up in a way she ought to go. I know these dames. Let her know who is the big guy, and if they don't fall pretty, wallop 'em one. They like it."

"Don't be too sure," said the more experienced high-toned crook. "This Travers jane seems to be somewhat different. She may prove a hard filly to fit the bit to, but, believe me, boy, with that hair and eyes we could take her to Monte Carlo, and in a while we'd own the old place."

"Righto," said the younger parasite.

At this juncture Tom Barton, garbed as a waiter, carrying coffee and cake on a big tray, entered the scene. He was flourishing the big tray in a manner that "boded no good" to the coffee and cake, as they say in the melodramas.

Tom offered the two Stapletons service, at the same time taking advantage of an opportunity to observe what they were watching so closely. He saw a sheltered nook, and he saw Dorothy entering it alone. The evening had been oppressive to her, and she was seeking an opportunity to be alone with her thoughts. She was not alone long, however, for Roddy jumped at the opportunity to be by her side away from the crowd.

The guests were scattered, making the best of the early evening to amuse themselves by their own devices. It is always thus at an outdoor affair.

Tom saw Roddy making for the nook, and he almost ran to beat him to it. As he approached Dorothy jumped to her feet and said:

"Why, Tom Barton! What on earth——"

"Sh-h-h!" cautioned Tom. "Can't tell you now. Big story. Heavy drama, much mystery, tremendous excitement, and

everything; front-page stuff. I am a hound for that front page——" and he walked right on by, not appearing to notice Dorothy at all.

Roddy came up almost instantly.

"Was that waiter addressing you?" he asked Dorothy.

"I told him to bring me a drink," said Dorothy. "He seemed to be muttering to himself. Some of these people are as eccentric as if they had money. They are some peculiar characters in service. I like to study them, like one would any other form of bug. And she looked right at Roddy Stapleton."

"Roddy muffed the innuendo in Dorothy's remark and leaned over to her. "May I not get you the ice water?" he asked with as much fervor as a guillotine convict might use in begging for his neck.

"Oh, never mind, never mind," repeated Dorothy. "The air will help me soon. I suppose that waiter will never bring the water, anyway. He seemed so preoccupied, and I would certainly not think of troubling you, Mr. Stapleton."

"No trouble at all, I assure you, and I do wish you would call me Roddy." He started for the water and Dorothy called him back.

"Really," she said, stifling a smile. "Do you know I never can think of your name. I always think of Rover and Roger and Rocky and everything but Roddy."

Unabashed, Roddy seated himself by the side of the girl. He took her hand, and she leaned away from him, but she let him hold her hand because she realized he had something in his system that would break out sooner or later, and the eruption might as well be cured now as any other time, she reasoned.

Tom was approaching the nook with another full tray. It was overburdened with coffee and cake. Tom took up a position where he could oversee most of the garden, and was holding the tray aloft like Liberty enlightening a much bored world, and to tell the truth, he realized that most of Stapleton's guests were getting bored, for the air seemed to vibrate with the fact that the party had been given for the elder Stapleton to impress the count, and for the younger Stapleton to impress the rich Miss Travers.

Roddy was progressing. He had slipped his arm partly around Miss Travers' waist and was saying:

"Dorothy—darling—please."

Tom and his tray, the biggest tray he could find, piled high with steaming coffee and sweating cake—Tom never did things by halves—interrupted this tender love scene. Or, at least, the scene was tender on one side. The other side might have been termed inert.

Dorothy looked up at Tom and his big tray and began to chuckle audibly. Roddy was peeved and showed it.

"These servants—— Sir, you are impudent," he began, but Tom upset a big cup of coffee in the lap of his strikingly creased and glittering dress suit, and that was that.

Roddy was forced to jump up. The coffee was reasonably hot, and it was penetrating, and the evening was warm, and so was Roddy, who smothered a string of oaths that would have sunk a tugboat.

"You infernal awkward clod," he stormed at Tom.

"Yes, sir, yes, sir, exactly, sir. I thank you, sir. I beg your pardon. I am an extra servant, and my family are ill, sir, and I am worried. I beg a thousand pardons, sir." Tom had let down his tray, and appeared to be trying to brush the dampness off of Roddy's clothing, but what he was really doing was rubbing the coffee in. He longed to swing what he knew as a haymaker and land it on Roddy's lack of chin, but he knew this would not be expedient or wise.

"Forgive the poor man, Rover—I mean Roddy," said Dorothy. "Think of his poor, starving children."

"I hope the whole family starves," said Roddy, completely forgetting himself.

"And I hope you choke to death and all your family dies in the electric chair," thought Tom, but he did not say it.

"Oh, how can you be so cruel," said Dorothy, frowning on Roddy, which brought Roddy to his senses.

"I should have been more gentle," he said. "Please forgive me, Dorothy." He

dismissed Tom with a wave and began to beg Dorothy to ride with him early the next day.

"Maybe," said Dorothy as she ambled toward the house. "It depends on how I feel in the morning."

CHAPTER SIX

AND that night, after the guests had arrived, Tom and the detective waiters were stationed about the Stapleton home. All had their orders from Detective Daly as to what to expect.

Tom was thinking of Dorothy as he crouched in a shadow under a stairway, where he could command a view of a big safe. Dim figures with flashlights were moving about. Unaware of what was happening two floors below her, Dorothy was dreaming in a chamber adjoining one occupied by her aunt. Light from a full moon flooded her bed as her aunt, who was restful, softly entered and kissed the sleeping girl. Then Mrs. Taylor, satisfied that all was well, retired and fell asleep, while downstairs two sets of dim figures busied themselves about an unusual night's work.

Two figures, with half-masks over their faces, were kneeling in front of the safe. They worked together with the harmony of two vaudeville dancers, in their efforts to work the combination of the strong-box. One was sandpapering his finger-tips. It was the Count Dahlstrom, but Tom and Daly, from where they were crouching, could not recognize him.

Soon the Count—one of the most expert cracksmen on two continents—had the combination worked and was swinging the big safe door open.

Daly cuckooed three times, beating the clock to it by several minutes. Then there was action. One set of dim figures landed on top of Dahlstrom and his accomplice, and, as a second pair of crooks rushed forward warned by a lookout signal, more detectives rushed forward.

For several minutes they battled fiercely, desperately, in total darkness. The foot of somebody connected with a Chinese god on a pedestal, and there was a crash which awakened the whole house. A rug in front of the safe was pushed about, and this set seemingly a hundred burglar-alarm bells ringing.

A fierce fight was also being waged at the top of the stairs, where a yeggman had encountered Stapleton and his son, who had started downstairs at the sound of the alarm. This lone yeggman, a stalwart fellow who had served as a stevedore, and whose pockets bulged with jewelry he had collected in a tour of the guests' rooms, was doing his utmost to worst the Stapleton duo when he was clouted behind the ear with a blackjack wielded by a pseudo-handsome waiter, otherwise identified as Detective Johnson, of the Central Office. Johnson slipped handcuffs on the startled Stapleton and son, and then handcuffed the pair to the felled yeggman. "Now fight it out," he said, and a thud sounded from below, followed by another thud, and a second later the whole place was flooded with light, for Daly had knocked his man out and had turned the wall switches.

The guests were rumbling down the staircases in all stages of dishabille. In the vanguard were Mrs. Taylor and Dorothy, in kimonos.

Daly and his crowd had gathered the Stapletons and Count Dahlstrom's gang of safe-crackers together and had them shackled in a corner of the hall.

"We missed one bird," Daly said to Tom, "unless the boys outside got him, because the Court always leaves one stalled outside to look for interference from the street. He either has fallen to Sergeant Doris and his squad, or else he is running himself ragged to get to the touring car." Then Daly, seeing the startled gathering of guests on the landing in the reception-hall which commanded a view of both the parlors and the library, where the big safe was located, looked up and said:

"Sorry to disturb you, folks, but I am Detective Daly of Central Office, and this welterweight comedian here is Tom Barton, reporter on *The Tribune*, and a personal friend of mine. He likes this kind of stuff.

We have rid the premises of a couple of mobs of crooks, meaning this Count's gang and the Stapletons themselves. They are a bad bunch, what I would call society four-flushers."

"What are you doing, Daly, making a speech?" grinned Tom, who never missed an opportunity to chaff the witty Daly.

"Well, then, you make it," said Daly, but Dorothy had come to Tom, and he had his arms around her and was making his speech in her ear.

"Dorothy, when do I get my answer?" Tom said, oblivious of the whole wide world and two mobs of crooks.

Dorothy, snuggling in Tom's arms, was chuckling.

"What's the comedy?" Tom said, his heart sinking.

"Tom, dear, what made you spill that coffee?" reassured Dorothy.

"You," said Tom, and then glanced up at the landing, crowded with guests, drinking in this unusual love scene with wide eyes. Tom turned his coat collar, as if in this way he could separate himself from the rest of humanity, and then he kissed Dorothy, and, looking up, said:

"I am hoping to make this dear girl my wife," for it seemed some explanation was due the witnesses.

"I am going to be his wife," affirmed Dorothy, and thus a troth was sealed in most unusual surroundings.

CRIMINALS ARE MADE, NOT BORN

DERIDING a popular belief that the criminal is "born, not made," Sir Basil Thomson, former head of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, gave the love of play to the gallery and the fascination of taking a "sporting chance" as the chief incentives to crime, in an address recently.

"What makes the professional criminal?" asked Sir Basil. "In England we made a census of prisoners in every penal institution, and found that 90 per cent. of them began their career of crime before reaching the age of 21. Furthermore, drink is not, as popularly supposed, a chief cause of crime, which generally starts in the child's love of histrionics, a desire for applause. The criminal father is not so much to blame as the criminal elder brother. Grown older, the criminal plays to a gallery of fellow-criminals. It is untrue that he is born, not made. It's the sporting chance that makes crime—the same thing that makes the railway traveler willing to ride on a train—he is sure that he will not be the only one out of a million people to be killed in an accident."

An astonishing excess of murders in the United States over those in England, said Sir Basil, was revealed in figures he had obtained from the American Bar Association, showing that in this country one in every 12,000 persons is murdered in a year, in England one in every 412,000.

"Your rise in crime began in the '90s," he continued, "and increased progressively since then. Your burglaries increased 1,200 per cent. in the last ten years. Strange to say, although your country seems to have more violent crimes than any other, you have less than the rest of dishonest and unclean crimes. You are very violent and very clean. How do you account for that?

"The gun is also responsible for much of your adolescent crime," said Sir Basil later in his address. "In England no dealer dares to sell a gun to any one without a license, and no licenses whatever are given to private persons. That is why our London detectives almost never carry revolvers. The criminals haven't any either. The English boy tempted to stage a hold-up refrains because he knows he'll have his head cracked, but if he had a gun he'd probably try it."

Other suggestions of Sir Basil's for the lessening of crime in this county were quick trials and sure sentences, no bail for convicted criminals awaiting appeal, and a provision for amending indictments pending trial.

Raising Checks

THE shrewdest and sharpest class of people are, as a general rule, to be found inside the prison wall. The counterfeiter, forger, bank robber, etc., all do their work so skillfully and successfully as to avoid the most skillful detectives and bank officials. A man to be successful in any of the above callings must be endowed mentally with gifts that, were they applied to an honest calling in life, would redound to their credit instead of putting them behind bars and bolts.

The class of men who are to be found in the above occupations are usually men of fine intellect, and in the majority of cases college graduates. The forger must be a skillful penman, which means not only to be a good writer, but the ability to write any and all sorts of hands. It has been estimated that more money is stolen by this class of criminals every year than by all the burglars, pickpockets and petty thieves combined. Banks and every mercantile house of any prominence protect themselves in a large measure from the inroads of the burglar by iron and steel safes, with locks and bars so arranged as to make it impossible for even the most finished safe cracker to break into; but these precautions, important as they are, do not deter or hinder the class of robbers referred to in the slightest degree from pursuing their work.

The most common method of swindling the public is that of forging the signature of some well-known depositor to a check. The crook does not leap into the scheme haphazard, but studies the ways and habits of the bank officials and his intended victim. He is usually a man of smooth, even disposition and temperament, a pleasing conversationalist, as by these means, from being a total stranger to the bank clerks, he in the course of a few days so far works his way into the confidence and good graces of his victims as to make the balance of the work comparatively easy. Once he gets a foothold and becomes acquainted he loses no time in securing a copy of the signature of his victim, and then he uses the genius and ability which is his stock-in-trade and with which he is endowed. From observation and acquaintance with his proposed victim he is careful not to fill the check out for such a large amount as to arouse the suspicions of the teller or cashier. His work is so neatly and cleverly done, and with his acquaintance with the officials, when the check is presented its genuineness is never doubted.

Many merchants are so careless in having their bankbook examined—and the forger knows this all—that frequently several checks are cashed bearing a forged signature before the victim is awakened to the loss he has sustained, and when his eyes are opened to the way in which he has been duped, the forger is many miles away. While this is a successful way of "raising the wind," the professional crook prefers to manipulate the small piece of paper rather than run the risk of incurring the heavy penalty attached to conviction, which is sure to happen sooner or later by forging a signature. There are plenty of business men who are exceedingly careless in the manner in which they fill out their checks. These are the ones that the crook selects as his victims. After once securing the check of a good man the check raiser immediately takes it to the room and proceeds to abuse it. Suppose the check was originally for five dollars. Merchants are not overly careful about spacing their figures and writing the amount. After the check leaves his possession he loses sight of it for several weeks.

Fancy his surprise when he receives his cancelled checks to see that the amount has

been raised from the original amount to $50 or $500. The work is so skillfully done that were it not for the stub in his bank-book he could not tell but what he had filled in the amount written on the face of the check before him. But whether the man who drew the check is careful or not, the crook is not deterred from fleecing him.

With the aid of a little more time and the assistance of certain chemicals, figures can be changed so that even the shrewdest and keenest of bank officials cannot detect the erasure. In order to obviate the raising of checks the banks introduced the tinted paper, as it was supposed that any erasing would show in the paper. Such a theory was correct, but the forgers immediately commenced to search for chemicals to overcome the obstacles thrown in their way, and at the present day tinted checks, with a little labor and care, can be raised as perfectly as a plain white.

The manner of doing the work is the same as is done with the white paper, erasing the lines and figures with chloride of lime applied at the end of a fine steel pen. After the marks have been entirely obliterated he brings into use a box of crayon and produces the proper tint on the paper. It is next placed in the calendar machine, from whence it comes out in such a state of perfection as to defy detection. Another ingenious method is to secure a check of a responsible man and by some means get one of his blank checks. This can be done, for the reason that numerous people, when asked for a blank check, will tear one out of the back of their book and give it to you merely for the asking. After securing the checks the next thing is to fasten them together and tear off the signature from one and a corresponding piece from the other. The paper being of a fibrous nature, the signature is affixed to the blank check and covered with sizing and then calendared, which avoids any possible detection even by the most experienced. The check is then ready to be filled out for whatever amount the crook, by the information he has previously obtained as to the general run of the checks his victim issues, thinks he can secure without fear of being picked up.

The same process is gone through with on drafts, but as they are issued only by the banks the care and precaution the cashiers take make it a difficult task to successfully perform the work. A number of the leading banks were called upon, and the officials that were spoken to said that forgery and raising checks and drafts were not common in this city of late.

During the conversation the official referred to said: "You would be surprised at the carelessness displayed by our depositors. Men that are neat and tidy and careful about the minutest matter in their stores fill out checks that a schoolboy would scorn to own as his. It is a wonder that more merchants are not short in their bank accounts on balance day than what there are. During my experience of twenty years I have never been duped by a raised or forged check; but this is more good luck than anything else, as I am aware that these men do their work so well that detection is well-nigh impossible, and if a check is presented at the window, signed by what we think a genuine signature, indorsed, etc., we have nothing to do but pay it. Banks are more guarded and careful in regard to drafts than formerly. Now no bank will sell a draft unless the purchaser is well known at the bank; by so doing we keep ourselves free from such crooks. Frequently checks are drawn up in lead pencil, showing how careless some men are.

ONE CARELESS DETAIL

by Mary Russell Dean

CHAPTER ONE

THERE were three of us at dinner that night at Carrilon's restaurant. I had come with my friend, Dr. Anton Kane, the renowned psychologist, and later Jennings, a young headquarters man, had happened in and joined us. The conversation had turned on several recent crimes.

"The public sits back and does the talking," Jennings remarked with a trace of bitterness. "But it's up to the force to do the work, and often there isn't a single working clue to stand on." Recent newspaper criticisms had evidently rankled in the young detective's mind.

Though scarcely twenty-five years of age, Jennings had already won a place high up on the force, and the chief had been heard to refer to him as his right-hand man.

Doctor Kane was speaking. "The clues may be there," he interposed, "but they are not always perceived. Now my remarks do not apply to you, as Jennings flushed darkly. "I believe from what I have heard that you have a trained perception and do not fall into the mistake which so many of the police are prone to. They fit the crime to some one, and after that all clues lead in the same direction. To the trained perception the process starts at the other end, and the identity of the criminal is fixed only after certain clues have led again and again to the same person. Your average detective makes the clues fit the supposed criminal, and the consequence is that many clever wrongdoers have escaped punishment and innocent men suffered in their stead."

"I don't agree with you, Doctor Kane," Jennings snapped. "Your idea of the force is all wrong, and I believe that the percentage of cases like that is very small indeed."

"Mister Jennings! Mister Jennings!" droned a call boy, "telephone for Mister Jennings.

Jennings rose and went into the telephone booth, and I was left alone with Doctor Kane. I have mentioned that he was a psychologist of some renown, but further than that I knew little about him, and he was somewhat of a mystery to me. I knew, though, that he had aided the police in several cases recently, rather sensational ones, and that few days passed that did not bring clients to the apartment which we shared in common on upper Fifth avenue. One stipulation he made, however, with the police and private clients alike, that being that his name should never appear in connection with the cases he undertook.

When Jennings returned a moment later there was an expression of grief on his face offset by one of fighting determination. He sat down heavily.

"Old Anthony Middleton, my best friend, the man who gave me my start, dead—poisoned. Come on, Doctor Kane, and you, too, Ashton." He strode out of the restaurant closely followed by us. "Here is a chance for some of your theories, my friend," he said grimly, turning to the doctor, "for, by Heaven, no one can ever make me believe that Anthony Middleton died by his own hand."

CHAPTER TWO

IT was after nine o'clock when we reached the great brownstone residence of Anthony Middleton on Riverside Drive. The hall was ablaze with lights and an officer met us at the door and led us down a wide hall to a room at the rear of the reception-rooms, the one which Mr. Middleton had used as a library. We found ourselves on the threshold of an octagonally shaped room, done in hard-oil finish, well lighted by a central chandelier, but simply furnished; a few bronze figures were scattered here and there, one steel engraving of the "Landing of the Pilgrims," and for the rest bookshelves lining the walls. District Attorney Patterson nodded for us to enter, and immediately we became aware of the figure in the revolving chair, which it had been impossible for us to see from the door, a screen having been placed around it. It was that of the millionaire, Anthony Middleton, and in death his features had assumed a placid expression; there was no unplesant contortion, but the man was unmistakably dead—had been dead for some hours. Doctor Graves had already made his first examination and gone, stating positively that death had occurred about four or five that afternoon, caused by a virulent form of poison. In fact, the dead man's features had begun to assume a bluish tinge. Jennings controlled his feelings admirably, but I knew that the tragic death of his benefactor was going hard with him. Mr. Middleton had saved him as a young lad from the temptations which beset a penniless boy in New York City, and later by his influence the young man had obtained a place on the force, which he had rapidly bettered. Small doubt but that he would bend his best efforts to the detection of Anthony Middleton's murder. In the air there was a very faint odor of peaches, which I had learned to associate with one of the most deadly of drugs, by which the millionaire had evidently died.

Patterson lifted the glass which stood on a table within easy reach of the dead man's hand. The only other article on the table was one of a first edition of Burns's poems. "Here's something funny, Jennings," commented Patterson. "Not a trace of poison in this glass, and yet he got it in some way, because that odor in the air is unmistakable."

While Jennings was getting the details of the crime from Patterson I listened, interested in this tragedy which had occurred, seemingly without design or motive, for who could wish to harm a man who all his life had done only good? Anton Kane, however, seemed to listen not at all to the low tones of the district attorney, but moved quietly about the room, touching nothing, observing everything—the arrangement of the furniture, the position of the dead man's body, and even the drugget under the revolving chair in which Middleton's body lay.

It seemed that there had been very few people in the house that evening, it being the servants' afternoon off, and only Jameson, the butler, and one maid had stayed on. Trenton Middleton, nephew of the dead man and who lived with his uncle, had been in Philadelphia for several days on business for his law firm; he was not expected back for several days, but a telegram had been despatched by Jameson hastening his return. The only other member of the family, Isabel Thorne, daughter of Anthony Middleton's only sister, had left the house some time during the afternoon, and so far all efforts to locate her had failed. I had heard Jennings speak of Mr.

Middleton's beautiful and willful niece, who, it seemed, was inclined to follow too closely in the footsteps of the first Isabel Middleton, who had married Oliver Thorne in the face of bitter opposition and exiled herself from family and friends. She had come back home to die, a broken but still beautiful woman, and little Isabel had been left in Anthony Middleton's care. That was eighteen years ago; the willful strain, inherited from her mother, seemed intensified, and Isabel Thorne, though a charming and lovely girl, was high-spirited and headstrong enough to cause her uncle a great deal of trouble. I confess I felt a great deal of curiosity about Miss Thorne and hoped that she would come in before our time was up.

Jennings listened carefully to Patterson's account, asked a few questions, and it was easy to see by the trend of his remarks whither suspicion was tending in his mind. But the hour was getting late, and leaving two policemen on guard at the house, we climbed into the patrol car and went back to town.

CHAPTER THREE

TWO days later Jennings interrupted us at breakfast. He was looking rather fagged, but there was an air of grim determination about him which sat ill on his youthful face.

"Sit down and eat, man," said Doctor Kane, touching the bell for our Jap, who brought in hot rolls, coffee and eggs. "A man's brain can't work without food, and I'll bet you haven't had anything to-day."

"How's the case coming on, Jennings?" I asked. "Anything new come out at the inquest?"

"Nothing but what we had surmised—death, due to a small quantity of prussic acid, took place about five o'clock in the afternoon. But I found out some interesting facts later, which the inquest failed to reveal. It was either a case of suicide, and that I'm prepared to swear is not true, or else it was an inside job. The very nature of the crime makes it impossible for it to have been the work of any one outside, and, anyway, old Jameson was busy about the front of the house the entire afternoon, and Mr. Middleton had no callers during that time. No outsider could have accomplished that crime. No! Some one he knew and trusted administered that poison to Mr. Middleton. And there is just one person who could have had a motive."

Anton Kane was listening intently, meanwhile toying with his empty coffee-cup.

"Who was his heir, or were there heirs?" he asked.

"His nephew, Trenton Middleton, and Isabel Thorne were co-heirs by Mr. Middleton's will; in fact, he had no other relatives. But that does not constitute a motive, because young Trenton has a large fortune of his own left by his father, and Miss Thorne also had an independent fortune, her mother's share of the estate, which Mrs. Thorne forfeited by her marriage, but which reverted to her heirs. No, money didn't play any part in this affair; it was something else. I have learned that Mr. Middleton and his niece quarreled bitterly the night before his death about the man to whom she had engaged herself. He was violently opposed to the marriage, and she was heard by one of the maids to threaten to kill herself if he continued in his opposition. You see, she's under age, just eighteen, in fact, and her guardian's consent was necessary. Maybe just a girl's idle threat, but it shows that she was desperate enough to overcome any obstacle to her will," Jennings concluded.

"That seems an incriminating bit of evidence," said Anton Kane thoughtfully. "Will she talk?"

"Not a word, except that she knows nothing of the crime and refuses to account for her time. Of course I can't place her under arrest until more concrete evidence is obtained; the funny part is that as far as I know, and she's been shadowed pretty thoroughly, she hasn't seen her fiancé, Captain Edgerton, at all, since Mr. Middleton's death. Well, I must be off. We are keeping pretty close at headquarters with the few clues we have," he said. "But I'll let

you all know when anything definite is discovered."

CHAPTER FOUR

DR. ANTON KANE made short work of his breakfast after Jennings had taken his departure. I had settled down to a quiet morning with my books, but was not sorry when he entered the study and suggested that I accompany him to the Middleton home on Riverside. But I was somewhat surprised, for since the night of the death he had evinced not the slightest further interest in the case. That something other than idle curiosity actuated him now I could not doubt, and I was inclined to believe that the fact which Jennings had let drop about Miss Thorne's refusal to talk accounted for his renewed interest. A difficult affair always whetted his interest.

"The most striking thing about this case, Ashton," he remarked thoughtfully, as we traversed Fifth avenue, "is the entire absence of clues or incriminating evidence of any sort, unless we count the threat made by Miss Thorne, which I am not inclined to attach any importance to. And besides, the threat was directed at *herself*, not toward her uncle. We might almost be misled into believing it a suicide, were we not well acquainted with Mr. Middleton's life and his deep religious convictions. But, knowing them, it is impossible to believe anything of the sort. However, there was no trace of the criminal left in that room. Either the person we are dealing with is a superior intelligence, or else——" He did not conclude his speech, but lapsed into an introspective silence.

Arriving at our destination on Riverside, we were admitted by Jameson. Doctor Kane surprised me by asking for Miss Thorne, and scribbling a few words on his card, sent it up by the butler, who returned presently with the answer that Miss Thorne would see us in a few minutes. My companion busied himself with a book of engravings, while I sat there lost in conjectures about the beautiful girl of whom I had heard so much and the sinister crime which had taken place.

When Miss Thorne entered the room I was momentarily taken aback; no imperious aristocrat this, but a slender, girlish figure robed in black and a face of such appealing sweetness and beauty that I hastily revised my mental estimate of her. A trace of sadness shadowed her face, which was made for laughter. Doctor Kane opened the interview tactfully, apologizing for our intrusion at such a time, adding that he had no connection whatever with the police.

Miss Thorne raised one hand wearily. "Please do not apologize, Doctor Kane. Indeed, I think that if you had not come this morning I would have called on you this afternoon; I heard of you through my friend, Mrs. Carrington, whom you aided in the affair with the government. I wish to retain you on my own behalf to clear up the absurd theories which the police are raising in their efforts to solve Uncle Anthony's death."

"Then I will ask you a few questions, Miss Thorne, and please be entirely frank with me," he replied earnestly. "Have you any reason for suspecting any one of your uncle's death?"

"Indeed, I have not, Doctor Kane. On the contrary, I am convinced that my uncle committed suicide; his reason for doing so I do not know and cannot guess. I depend on you to uncover such motives and proofs as will settle all doubt and make the police cease their tiresome investigations; I cannot stir from this house without being spied upon, and it is very annoying. I will not conceal from you the fact that my uncle and I had a terrible quarrel the afternoon before his death, and I left him in great anger. I never saw him alive again. At the same time I cannot bring myself to feel responsible of having caused his death, even indirectly, for I cannot believe that my conduct could be construed as the cause of his suicide. Uncle Anthony was a strong man; no mere quarrel, however bitter, could cause him to take his own life, and yet that is what I believe happened. There must be some other cause of which we are as yet ignorant."

"Miss Thorne, what was the cause of your quarrel with Mr. Middleton? As we are all groping in the dark at present, we can afford to overlook nothing.

"We quarreled over the man I was engaged to marry, Doctor Kane. My uncle felt so strongly on the subject that he told me that if I married Captain Edgerton he would not only disinherit me in his will, but never see me again. And I knew he would keep his word. However, as I inherited a comfortable fortune from my mother, which I knew he could not prevent me from getting when I come of age, I determined to leave this house and go to my fiancé and be married at once." A note of intense bitterness had crept into her voice. "Doctor Kane, my uncle was right. My fiancé proved himself a mere fortune hunter, as my uncle had always said he was, and the modest fortune I will come into when I am twenty-one was not enough to tempt him. Though I refused to tell Mr. Jennings where I was the afternoon of my uncle's death, I will tell you; that afternoon after the quarrel with my uncle I went to Captain Edgerton. I threw myself on his generosity and told him that my uncle would not only disinherit me, but refused to see me again unless I gave him up. It was then that he revealed his true character and thoroughly disillusioned me. At first he spoke tenderly and counseled "patience" until "something turned up" to change Mr. Middleton's opinion of him. He even hinted that my uncle would not live forever. Then, when he found that I was not amenable to his suggestions, he gave me plainly to understand that he had no wish to marry a girl who would foolishly throw away such a fortune as would come to me by Uncle Anthony's will. Oh, the horror of it! I returned that night to find my uncle and win his forgiveness, only to find him dead." Her voice broke.

A light tap sounded on the door, and Miss Thorne mastered her emotion. I knew that such grief as hers was genuine, and thought of Jennings working on a hopeless trail.

It was Trenton Middleton, only nephew of the dead man, who entered the room—a tall fellow of athletic build, with a frank, engaging countenance. Miss Thorne introduced us, explaining why we were there, and young Middleton gave us both a firm handshake, then turned to Miss Thorne.

"You mustn't bother yourself with these details, Isabel; let me attend to them. If Uncle Anthony was murdered we want the criminal caught, but if, as my cousin and I both think, he committed suicide, we want that fact plainly established. All this suspense and investigation is getting on Miss Thorne's nerves, so hereafter come to me with your reports. We have both suffered a great grief"—his handsome face clouded—"and naturally we want to have the affair settled as soon as possible and close this house for a season, at least." He paused, then added: "I am now engaged in investigating my uncle's business affairs, and any clues I find will be placed promptly at your disposal."

Shortly after Doctor Kane and I took our departure. We hailed a taxi going into town, and during the ride back I could see that the doctor was deeply engrossed in thoughts of which he did not speak.

"Surely Miss Thorne is innocent, although Jennings seems so positive of her connection with the murder," I ventured at length.

Anton Kane favored me with one of his blank stares.

"One thing is very certain," he said slowly. "She is trying very hard to convince herself that her uncle committed suicide."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE following day was rainy, with the first hint of autumn in the air. Doctor Kane had gone by the time I rose, so I breakfasted alone, and afterwards glanced idly through the columns of the morning paper. I wondered what new trail Kane was pursuing in the Middleton case, for the fact that he had gone out so early portended a swift coming of events, and I had no doubt that with him working on the case the day would bring them forth.

Later I buried myself in my work, for I

was interested in finishing a treatise for which my publishers were calling. Anton Kane did not show up for lunch, and the first word I had from him was at three o'clock that afternoon, when he phoned me and asked me to summon Jennings, District Attorney Patterson, Doctor Graves, who testified at the inquest, and one or two others to a conference that night at the Middleton home on Riverside. "And get Captain Edgerton, too, Ashton," he added, as though actuated by an afterthought. "Meet you at Riverside to-night." And he snapped the receiver up.

When I reached the house that evening Jameson took me at once to the library, where a small audience, composed of those interested in the Middleton affair, was waiting. Trenton Middleton, Isabel Thorne, the district attorney, and Jennings were there. And seated somewhat apart from the others was a man whom I instinctively knew to be Captain Edgerton, whom I had spoken to on the phone that afternoon. He was a handsome man, with a dark, decided cast of features, but just now his face was shadowed by conflicting emotions, and I wondered if it could be fear, curiosity, or chagrin which was affecting him.

Doctor Kane came in at that moment and gave a cheery greeting to all present, conspicuously including the captain in his bow.

"I have asked you all to come here this evening," he began quietly, "in order to clear up a few points concerning Anthony Middleton's death. His nephew, Trenton Middleton, and Miss Thorne engaged me to investigate and settle certain theories concerning suicide. I have done so and found that Anthony Middleton's death was not accidental, nor did he commit suicide, although he died by his own hand." He paused, and through the profound silence which had fallen upon the room I seemed to hear the sound of a wildly beating heart. I turned in my chair, and of the emotions depicted on the faces before me that of Isabel Thorne was the most poignant. Anguished fear held her in its grip; Captain Edgerton's face was a blank mask of inscrutability, and Trenton Middleton's fine countenance wore an expression of startled incredulity.

Doctor Kane continued, uninterrupted by a word: "Yes, Anthony Middleton himself administered the dose which caused his death, and yet he was foully murdered. Look!" He held up a small, round, innocent-looking white pill of the most ordinary appearance, and said: "Mr. Middleton suffered with indigestion, and had tried hundreds of remedies, even patent medicines, without success. Some one who knew this concocted a plan of devilish ingenuity. By microscopic examination I found that with the aid of a hypodermic needle some pills like this were filled with enough poison to kill several men. The victim received the instrument of his death through the mail under the guise of a harmless advertising sample. The pills lay on this table for a day or two, then death followed instantly upon a trial of them, leaving no trace of the mind which had engineered the crime."

A cry broke from Isabel Thorne. Slowly she turned her burning eyes on Captain Edgerton, searching that countenance.

"I have learned there was one person," Doctor Kane continued relentlessly, "to whom the death of Anthony Maxwell had become vital." With a quick movement he turned and confronted Trenton Middleton, who half rose, his pallid countenance betraying unmistakable guilt.

"Your scheme was almost flawless, and your alibi perfectly arranged, Mr. Middleton," said Kane in a hard voice. "But there was just one careless detail you overlooked." He held up a package of canceled checks. "You made your error when you left *these* in your desk at the office. They showed me that you had spent in the last six months more than a hundred thousand dollars on the charming but expensive novelty dancer, Pearl Lagloire. There were many more unpaid bills yet to be met, and only a fortune such as would come to you upon the death of your uncle could save the situation. And, besides, Pearl gave you away. Jennings, arrest your man."

"My God!" gasped Middleton. "I'm caught!" and he reeled and fell in a dead faint, his last words admitting his guilt.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
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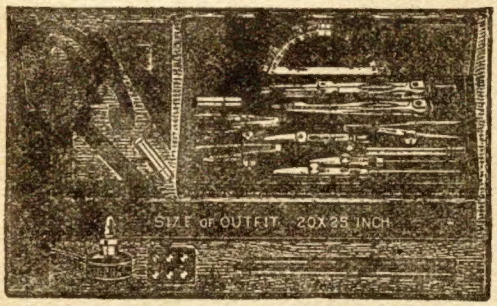

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